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The Chippendales

BY

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THE CHIPPENDALES

The Chippendales

CHAPTER I

BLAISDELL had come to Boston to seek his fortune. Not precisely without a penny in his pocket, as tradition expects, but with only two thousand dollars in the bank and knowing no one in the Athens of America. He had been born and his boyhood had been spent in a large town in the State of Maine. His father had fallen in the Civil War, and Hugh's education—Hugh McDowell Blaisdell was his full name—had been obtained by sacrifices on his mother's part. Although eager to go to work in order to provide comforts for her old age, he had yielded to her prayer that he should pass four years at one of the smaller New England colleges, from which he had lately been graduated. Six weeks after his Commencement Day his mother had died. When he roused himself from his grief to face the world he had chosen Boston rather than New York, mainly because a friend offered to give him a letter of introduction to General Horatio Langdon, the banker. General Langdon, who was the commanding officer of the brigade to which his father had belonged, had not only found him a business opening, but had recommended him to apply for lodgings to Mrs. Avery. Her abode was on Dartmouth Street, but on that part of it slightly to the

south of Copley Square—just beyond the pale of fashion, yet within breathing distance of an æsthetic atmosphere. Were not the Museum of Fine Arts and Trinity Church close at hand?

Though only forty-eight hours had elapsed since his coming, Blaisdell believed that he had made a favorable impression on the inmates of the house. He desired people to like him; people always had liked him—as a lad and at school and at college. In the beginning he had never thought of the effect he produced; indeed, he did not now think about it at the time, for he was not self-conscious; but he had examined his own winning way and intended to persevere in it. Did this consist in his wide-awake and sociable address? Or his incisive power of stating what he had to say? Or his cheerful, optimistic point of view? Listlessness and indifference were repugnant to him. Ever since he could remember, it had been natural to him to be pleasant to those with whom he was brought in contact, and the sound of his own voice had had no terrors for him. How many people were listened to grudgingly because they were ineffective in their delivery! No one hesitated to interrupt them, and they were thrust into the background. He liked to keep his listeners silent until he had finished. Every-day humor appealed to him, and he not only enjoyed an entertaining anecdote but could tell one engagingly, a faculty which was also characteristic of Abraham Lincoln, most illustrious of self-made men.

In the light of his perception of these qualities, certain historic careers beckoned to him, and he believed that he recognized in himself some of the hall-marks requisite for success. He intended to succeed; he had always so intended; with which goal in view he had studied hard at

school and had proved to be one of the leading scholars in his class at college. His first idea had been to become a lawyer—one who would convince courts and juries by his clear, fluent logic. The desire to earn money more rapidly so as to recompense his mother for her devotion while she was still capable of enjoying the luxuries of modern life—concerning which he had read in the newspapers—had turned his mind toward business, and his mind had remained fascinated by the prospect. If others had been able to accumulate large fortunes by persevering industry and the shrewd exercise of their wits, might he not do the same? The vast industrial resources of the country were just beginning to reveal themselves. Why should he not take part in their discovery and exploitation?

The thought had become a fixed purpose by the beginning of his Senior year. There were some family precedents for his decision. His paternal grandfather had been a local judge and his maternal grandfather a physician, but when the war broke out his father had been paying-teller of the town bank, and his mother's only brother, who was drowned in the prime of life on one of the Maine rivers, had been a lumber merchant and the owner of sawmills. His mother's death had crushed his spirit for the time, so that he took no joy and found no stimulus in anything. When, at the spur of necessity, he opened his eyes and faced reality, he saw himself at the bottom of the ladder, lacking resources and influential friends. He could have remained at college as a tutor, but his imagination had been fired and his mind was made up. Yet in his day-dreams he had avoided fixing on the particular business he wished to follow; indeed, he did not possess the knowledge necessary for apt discrimination as to which offered the surest opportunity to an ambitious youth. He was

eager for a foothold, and in that spirit he had grasped the first hand held out to him. "We have no vacancy at the present time," said Horatio Langdon, "but I happen to know of a firm which is on the lookout for an enterprising young man—one not afraid of work. The junior partner has died recently and they are short-handed." This conversation had taken place a week before, and now he was a clerk in the employ of Delano and Hurd, brokers and dealers in stocks and bonds.

He had come home from the office this afternoon only just in time to get ready for dinner. As he looked in the glass while shaving he beheld a smiling countenance. He was thinking of the two girls, his landlady's daughter, Lora Burroughs, and her step-daughter, Priscilla Avery, and was reflecting on his good fortune in finding himself under the same roof with them both. Mr. Langdon had done him another good turn in this. And how dissimilar they were! Blaisdell was not sure which of the two he admired the most. Hearing their voices as he ascended the stairs to his chamber he had asked himself again this question, which he was still pondering. Possessing the happy faculty of summoning the absent before his mind's eye, he proceeded to make a mental photograph of them for his edification. In Lora he saw a trig, compact little girl of medium height, with an erect carriage and alert movements. She was becomingly plump. These evidences of elasticity served to neutralize the somewhat doll-like effect of her blue eyes, golden hair, dimples, and slight lisp. The thought—though strictly impersonal—had already occurred to him that here was a desirable combination—a woman whom it would be a constant joy to caress and who would neglect neither her husband's dinner nor his stockings.

Priscilla, on the contrary, was tall and spirited-looking, with wavy dark-brown hair, a nose just aquiline enough to denote strength of will without being obtrusive, and what he defined to himself as a swan-like neck. Her movements were graceful but swift, suggesting a spirit of unrest, as though she were pursuing something which constantly eluded her. His experience of womankind was limited, but he believed that he preferred what he called comfortable girls—and Priscilla, with all her beauty, was obviously of the high-strung order. She interested him, yet she reminded him of a tense young Amazon; whereas Lora's musical laugh was soothing and would be a menace to care. The first time he had heard it was on the day of his arrival. On the way up-stairs to show him his room, Mrs. Avery had introduced him to her two daughters, who were descending. In depositing his bag in order to shake hands, he had managed to knock it with his foot so that it toppled over and went bumping down three or four steps until caught by the wainscoting. Thereupon Priscilla's soulful eyes had danced, but Lora had exploded gleefully.

Like the good-humored fellow he was, Blaisdell was susceptible to mirth at his own expense. On the other hand, he was not fond of making slips, however unimportant. To be sure-footed and clear-cut in whatever he undertook was a leading article in his code of life. He had echoed Lora's merriment, but he had looked at her with an expression which announced definitely, though playfully, that he intended to be even with her some day. And her blue eyes had drooped under his gaze. Was it on this account that a vision of convulsed loveliness set in a frame of golden hair rose before him as he thought of her?

Now that he had brought his mind to bear upon the question, he was conscious of this slight preference. Yet it merged itself again in his sense of general satisfaction at his surroundings, for he was encouraged to believe that he had become a member of a family circle rather than an occupant of a boarding-house. His landlord, Gideon Avery, a student of science and an inventor, visionary but scholarly and refined—a sort of Ralph Waldo Emerson looking man with dreamy eyes and a slight stoop—gave an air of gentle dignity to the establishment which harmonized with his prepossessions regarding Boston. He had wedded recently—so General Langdon had informed Blaisdell—a second wife, Mrs. Olive Burroughs, widow of the late Colonel Leander J. Burroughs, of Ohio. She had come east to complete the training of her daughter Lora's voice, and the marriage had been the result of a summer's propinquity at one of the beaches where their small cottages had stood side by side. The second Mrs. Avery was buxom, ingratiating and capable. She, as well as Lora, could sing and play attractively, and they both had at the tips of their fingers all the melodies of the day. On the library table lay the latest books and the current magazines. Lora was taking the course at the Conservatory of Music and Priscilla Avery was studying art for the time being at the neighboring Museum. It appeared that his landlady had induced her husband, who had lived for years under the shadow of the Harvard elms, to set up his new household gods in Boston in order that the girls might be nearer to their work. There was another boarder besides himself, named Morgan Drake, a young man with large eyes and a thin, wan face, who was connected with a magazine and had literary aspirations.

Thus complacent at his good fortune in having fallen on

his feet, Blaisdell went down-stairs. It was Saturday and he recalled that Mrs. Avery had informed him at breakfast that she kept open house on Saturday evenings for the homeless and the clever young men of her acquaintance—most of them interested in one or another of the arts. She gave him to understand, that during the year since her marriage, they had acquired the habit of dropping in for a welsh rabbit after the recently established symphony concerts; and that she was apt to invite to meet them two or more of her daughters' girl friends and some of the junior instructors from the neighboring University across the Charles.

While Blaisdell was finishing his toilet the rest of the family, including Mr. Drake, had been listening to the animadversions of a guest who had been asked to dine—Mr. Paton, assistant professor of Greek at Harvard. He was a rather short and rather stout, yet dapper man of thirty, with a dome-like forehead and a heavy, brown mustache which curved deeply and rose in bristling points, giving him a somewhat piratical look in spite of his glasses. He was fond of airing his grievances, chief among which were the encroachments of science on the sacred classical curriculum—the time with which we are concerned was the early eighties—and the growth of the elective system of studies. He was known by the Averys to be engaged in the preparation of a work on the Greek dramatists, designed to emphasize their literary significance, and it happened that the first words said to him by his hostess as she greeted him had been the sympathetic inquiry, "How goes the *magnum opus?*"

She uttered this in an undertone, but he chose to answer it aloud, as though he desired the widest audience, standing with his back against the mantel-piece. "What time

has a man in my position for original work? There was a time when a professor at Harvard College was a personality —a moral and æsthetic force—not a mere intellectual machine run at high pressure."

Mrs. Avery's parlor was pseudo pre-Raphaelite in tone. The predominant colors of its upholsteries were chromatic greens and yellows. The medium-sized room had a cosy but somewhat crowded effect. At opposite corners stood two tall lamps with large Japanese shades. There were sundry low chairs, a piano, and a divan piled with soft cushions sheltered by a screen decorated with real fans. Lora was sitting among the cushions, a banjo in her lap. Priscilla leaning forward from a basket-work chair observed the speaker, with whose opinions she generally disagreed, although she knew him to be a scholarly person. To her he represented a censorious attitude of mind and hostility to progress, whereas she had sympathy with enthusiasm and welcomed new ideas.

"But you get three months' vacation every year, don't you?" It was Lora who spoke, never antagonistic, but invariably practical.

Mr. Paton shrugged his shoulders as a Frenchman might have done. "We're fagged—done up by Commencement Day," he exclaimed trenchantly. "But the real point, Miss Lora, is that there's no longer any real reverence for learning out there. Everything is sacrificed to the plan of rushing men through as fast as possible in order that they may get a job. A scholar—a trainer of scholars ought to have time to ponder. Then we'd develop into something besides academic automatons. As it is——"

"But my idea of some of the old professors—the kind you revere—was that they were—er—almost lazy," broke

in Priscilla. "They colored their pipes, they pottered in their gardens, and now and then they delivered a lecture."

"Exactly. Yet they had atmosphere; and they published masterpieces, not pamphlets."

"But one was required to study subjects one didn't care for at the feet of men who might be drowsy or behind the times. Now a student need go in only for the courses he is interested in; and isn't it fair that his instructors should devote their best energies to teaching him what there is to know? That's the modern view."

"The modern view! The dollars and cents point of view," he retorted. "We must earn our salaries to the last nickel."

At this point in the conversation Blaisdell entered the room.

"Professor Paton, let me make you acquainted with our new boarder, Mr. Blaisdell. Mr. Paton is a professor of Greek at Harvard," said Mrs. Avery in her cheerful, resonant voice. "He would have us believe that the elective system is all wrong because some of the students will have none of his pet Latin and Greek. You never get much solid comfort in this house, do you, Mr. Paton?"

Alert and gracious, Mrs. Avery, in her silk dress cut square in front with flowing lace sleeves, looked, as she glanced from one to the other, a little like a pouter pigeon. She was about her daughter Lora's height and comely still in spite of her full cheeks. She, too, had dimples, and her silky light brown hair, arching itself becomingly in its profusion, gave to her expression a certain coquetry which tempered her whole-souled laugh and executive ways. "This is his hobby and the girls lose no opportunity to tease him," she added in an audible whisper, turning to Blaisdell.

"The tide is running their way now, but wait—wait for twenty years and see what people will say then." The professor gave a nervous twist to his mustache by way of emphasis.

"Twenty years! We may all be in our graves by that time," cried Mrs. Avery. But dismissing this mortuary train of thought, she added, "Long before the end of twenty years you will have finished your *magnum opus*, Mr. Drake will be famous as a poet or a novelist, and my husband will have perfected his invention." As she concluded she beamed on Mr. Avery, who was patiently waiting for his dinner, a silent yet attentive listener.

Blaisdell perceived that his landlady was an optimist, and his heart warmed toward her. That she should manifest faith in the entire company revealed an agreeable outlook on life. It was obvious that she was the executive spirit of the establishment, and at the same time level headed. Presumably she was not blind to her husband's visionary proclivities, and yet chose to humor them. Simultaneously Blaisdell had observed a shade of restraint come over Priscilla's countenance as though she did not approve of the encouragement vouchsafed to her father. He noticed how like to her father's was the high bred, delicate cast of her features, but that there the resemblance ceased. At least she displayed none of his deprecating forebearance, but, on the contrary, was evidently disposed to challenge what did not please her.

Blaisdell, too, was ready for his dinner, yet content to bask for a moment in the sunshine of his own good fortune. What a pretty room it was—much the most inviting and ornamental he had ever seen outside of an hotel. He had as yet no social standards, for up to this point there had been few opportunities in his life for discrimina-

tion, and it had never occurred to him to question the substantial truth of the euphemistic maxim, early imparted to him, that all Americans are created equal. There were criminals, of course, and the lowest grade of foreigners, but everybody else was practically the peer of his neighbor. Such apparent grades as existed marked merely the possession of a little more or less money, a distinction which signified nothing socially. At the same time, he was aware that Americans as a rising nation were constantly making progress, and it elated him to find himself in surroundings compared to which those of his early days seemed plain and even dingy. As he took in once more the enlivening effect of the Japanese lamp shades and the screen decorated with real fans, he silently applauded the domestic enterprise of his new friends. Was not the girl who had laughed at him, sitting in her pretty frock among the cushions toying with her banjo, a real and enchanting improvement on the heroines of Eastern love tales? While he thus reflected their eyes met, and at the same moment he heard her remark with a solicitude which struck him as mock—

"But, mama, you left out Mr. Blaisdell from your prophecy."

All eyes were promptly turned on the new boarder, which was doubtless what the young woman had intended.

"It wasn't because I overlooked him, you may be sure of that, dear," said Mrs. Avery blithely, "but forty-eight hours is a short time in which to fathom the secret ambition of a young man's soul unless one is a mind reader. Mr. Blaisdell is in business," she explained for the benefit of Professor Paton. "He has just started, and, without any disrespect to Greek, we may fairly assume that he hopes in twenty years to be very rich and able to live on

the water side of Beacon Street, or the sunny side of Commonwealth Avenue. There! Mr. Blaisdell, will that do? But speaking of mind readers, we have the next best thing in our midst—an astrologist. If I am in error, Priscilla will read your horoscope."

It was never disconcerting to Blaisdell to be made the focus of attention, and as he stood unabashed and good-humored seeking his cue, he observed that Miss Avery, unlike many girls in similar circumstances, neither simpered nor protested.

"I hope to succeed, certainly; and in business that must mean making money, I suppose. But as to the rest, the water side of Beacon Street and the sunny side of Commonwealth Avenue, I scarcely know where they are and much less what they signify. So will you try?" he asked, bowing toward Priscilla. He was not averse to knowing what this interesting looking girl would discover in him. Had it been Lora, she might have chosen to be tormenting, but he divined that her step-sister was sure to be frank.

Nor was Priscilla diffident where her interest was aroused. Semi-humorous on her step-mother's part as she knew the suggestion to be, she acceded to it with an alacrity born of her sudden willingness to make a more thorough scrutiny of this newcomer's countenance than she had yet allowed herself. Many of her evenings at the seaside during the summer of her father's courtship had been spent in studying the starry heavens, a pursuit which had led her to dip into astrology sufficiently to become conversant with the lingo of lucky and malign influences. Yet she did not now invoke this as she arose and, shading her brows, studied the features of the stalwart young man who had invited her to provide the assembled company with a clue to his inmost character. She was prepared to

risk a prophecy by the light of her intuitions, and desired merely to make sure that the definite impression which she had already formed was correct. Blaisdell had appeared on the horizon just at the moment when she felt the need of some one to whom she could point as an illuminating contrast—some one whose personality appealed to her as the antipodes in the flesh of the man with whom her family was trying to persuade her that she was in love, and whom it hoped that she would marry. Henry Sumner had come into her life in a romantic guise—but was he not the embodiment of qualities with which she had no patience?

The figure of her prototype was erect and thick set, but of manly height. His air was reliant and cheerful. Obviously he was a victim neither to dyspepsia nor to self-distrust. His round face was full and not too mobile; indicating that he would not go off at a tangent contrary to the dictates of common sense. His eyes were a trifle small, but keen and alive with energy. There was a correlation between them and his shrewd, humorous mouth, the expression of which was guarded but not concealed by a brown mustache inclined to be stiff. Smooth-shaven, he might have resembled a friendly priest or wise cherub. As it was, his effect was sturdily secular. In the state of mind Priscilla was in, he impressed her as being one of the sanest and most pleasant looking young men she had ever beheld. Though he lacked some of the graces, his personality seemed to her to overshadow that of every one else in the room, radiating enterprise and determination. Who could doubt that here was a spirit which, when it had an end in view, would not perpetually be beating about the bush or questioning the accuracy of its aim? And best of all, the dominant note of his character appeared to be en-

thusiasm. She felt sure that he would never feel that it was his mission to pour cold water on everything like some people she could mention.

"I do not pretend to be able to disclose Mr. Blaisdell's secret ambition, but I can see that, whatever it may be, he will do something practical—do it thoroughly without doubt or misgivings. And I venture to predict that he will never let his New England conscience—if he has one —interfere with his usefulness."

Priscilla's tone was a little like that of a dauntless believer uttering a creed in the teeth of opposition. It was apparent to Blaisdell that he was merely the pretext for a confession of faith. At the same time her words tallied with his own inner purposes so completely that he marvelled. He heard Lora clap her hands by way of tribute to the appositeness of the divination, and Mrs. Avery exclaim gayly:

"There's a character to live up to, Mr. Blaisdell. Mark my words, Priscilla knows what she is talking about."

"I shall try. It's the sort of man I should like to be." Blaisdell's hearty response left no room for doubt both that he was ready to set his feet in the path which had been blazed for him, and was undismayed at the prospect. "As to my conscience, Miss Avery, it's New England, but I shall hope to justify your confidence in my common-sense."

"Neatly put. Shall we go in to dinner?" said Mrs. Avery, for the maid stood at the door.

"Is not all life a struggle to reconcile common-sense with conscience?" asked Professor Paton sententiously. "But do any two agree precisely as to what is common-sense?"

"No two, perhaps, except Miss Avery and I."

The music of Lora's explosive laugh was Blaisdell's reward for this rejoinder. In his ignorance he imagined that Priscilla had been shooting over his head at the professor, yet he could not quite account for the sudden intensity with which she had spoken. Now that he measured swords with him for a moment, he noticed that she smiled, but not as though she took a strong personal interest in their exchange of pleasantries. He divined that she had something on her mind the inwardness of which her speech had not revealed to him. He noticed, too, that, as she walked into dinner at her father's side, the mild-mannered inventor stroked the back of his daughter's head after the manner of one who, by a coaxing touch, seeks to soothe and restrain a beautiful but unbroken steed.

CHAPTER II

It had not occurred to Priscilla Avery that her father would marry again. She had taken for granted that his habit of worship at the shrine of her mother's memory would be proof against middle-aged masculine sprightliness or the blandishments of coquetry. From all she had been able to gather her mother had been exactly suited to him—a sweet, highly sensitive woman of his own social circle, with corresponding spiritual and intellectual sympathies. Yet when Priscilla realized that Mrs. Olive Burroughs had captured him in his fifty-second year, while she experienced a slight sense of shock, she admitted to herself that on the whole it was the best thing for him which could have happened.

It had been a clear case of propinquity. Mrs. Burroughs and Lora had been their next door neighbors at

one of those beaches where people of modest means, escaping from heat and humidity, camp out in tiny frame cottages nearly as close to one another as the bathing houses in the foreground of their landscape. The cheery, buxom widow, who sang snatches of light opera and Salvation Army hymns while attending to her household duties, and who boasted that she had no nerves, had begged them from the first evening to be sociable.

Her cottage, the exterior of which was draped with "Old Glory," and from the front eaves of which hung Chinese lanthorns, revealed to the visitor who crossed the threshold a nest of gay silk cushions fortified by all the magazines and latest mechanical puzzles like "Pigs in Clover." The dexterity with which his hostess compelled each of the marbles or disks to seek its appointed place was a constant source of amused surprise to Gideon Avery who, in spite of his erudition concerning the principles controlling such matters, was awkward in his manipulation of these slippery nothings of science. He would sit by the hour fascinated by his inability to master the toy on his lap, while the widow strummed with spirit at the piano and sang the airs which every one was humming, or read to him some progressive paper on a timely topic. They had family bathing parties, after the gaiety of which they sat on the sand while the ladies dried their hair. The indifference of Mrs. Burroughs at such times to considerations of vanity became a feather in her spiritual cap. It was as though she said, "You see I disguise nothing. Perpetual prinking is a foe to informality, and informality is the spice of life."

It was a surprise to Priscilla that one who, in her ways and point of view was so unlike most Cambridge women, should be able to captivate her father, for Mrs. Burroughs

had won him by her blithe and somewhat showy versatility—the handiness and gusto with which she could turn from the preparation of griddle cakes to the discussion of current world problems. These were the widow's summer manners to be sure—for they were living a "camping out" life; nevertheless, Priscilla could not but be conscious that their genial, bustling neighbor was of a less delicate clay than her transcendental and sensitive parent. Yet when he told her in a shy, half-apologetic way that he was enamoured of the charms of informality, the announcement caused her no repugnance. On the contrary, she argued that association with this energetic helpmate, who was of a suitable age for him, had a small property of her own which would be serviceable, and was a thrifty yet agreeable housekeeper, would enliven the rest of his days and make the final disappointment in regard to his scientific experiments, which she believed to be in store for him, more easy to bear. To a girl of eighteen his fifty-two years marked the beginning of an end, and she rejoiced to think that when she should leave his house for a home of her own, or to strike out for herself, there would be some one at his side to make him comfortable and happy.

The results had thus far more than justified Priscilla's anticipations. Mrs. Avery's first husband, Colonel Leander J. Burroughs, who had followed the law after leaving the army, had died just as he was beginning to reap the fruits of professional success and cautiously to feel his way, like a true Ohio statesman, toward the Presidency of the United States. She was seven years his junior and Lora was their only child. He left a small life insurance and the remnants of several large fees—some $20,000 in all—which had enabled the widow to come East for the purpose of ascertaining if Lora's voice were of operatic calibre.

Opinions at home—the growing town to which they belonged—were unanimous that Lora was a prodigy, and though Mrs. Burroughs recognized in her daughter her own full-throated ease, an endowment which when reinforced by lack of diffidence easily deceives the uninitiated, she cherished hopes that such was the case. It was a disappointment when they told her at the Conservatory in Boston that the prodigy would be able to hold her own admirably in a church choir, and might by diligence fit herself to shine in small concert halls, but that she could never hope to become a prima donna by any amount of zeal or application; yet the elastic sense, if it may so be called, of both mother and daughter had saved them from falling under the spell of a definite delusion. They had faced the situation and agreed that, since they were on the spot, the wisest thing was to spend a year in the vicinity in order that Lora might obtain the instruction necessary to enable her to make the most of such voice as she had. Then, fleeing from the summer heat, they had found themselves next door neighbors of Gideon Avery and his daughter.

Priscilla had many times asked herself why Mrs. Burroughs had seen fit to marry her father. To her eyes he was a lovable but pathetic figure—a man who had failed utterly in the struggle of existence to accomplish practical results, and who was still self-deluded. Just at the age when the young are prone to judge their parents most severely, she felt pity for him as well as deep affection, a compound resulting in a state of mind which yearned to protect him from himself. She did not begrudge in the least his having spent his small capital in the fruitless endeavor to elucidate mysteries which still baffled him. His life was a failure from the point of view of the world, but

it was his life, and however visionary he might appear to others, he had been faithful to his high aims. What she resented was that he remained unconvinced and wished at his age to persevere. Very soon after the marriage she had said to her step-mother from the fulness of her heart, "I do hope that you will not lend my father any money to throw away on experiments." Already the new wife's income had provided him with numerous small comforts, and Priscilla dreaded the possibility that now, when he was likely to be comfortable for the rest of his life, the same depleting process might begin again.

Mrs. Avery's reply had been characteristic. "I guess I shan't let him bankrupt me. But, you know, I believe in your father. I'm sure that he is going to work something grand out of his experiments before he dies—something, maybe, which will set the world on fire." Then she added, "And he is such a gentleman!"

Indisputable as was the last remark, it had struck Priscilla at the moment as irrelevant. Subsequently she came to the conclusion that she had not done entire justice to Mrs. Burroughs's point of view, and that it served to throw some light on the inquiry why the latter had changed her name to Avery.

As a matter of fact, Gideon Avery's refined, sensitive personality had appealed to the widow. Like Blaisdell, she, too, had been reminded the first time she beheld him, of the picture she had formed of Emerson. There was the same gentleness of bearing, slim figure, and austerely serene countenance. Her imagination was on the alert, and, though the East was, according to her preconceived opinions, effete and socially stolid, she was in no haste to leave it. Why not settle down for the rest of her days—she was only thirty-eight—under the shadow of Harvard College

with this gentle man of science who, though he might never bring to pass anything practical, would give her a dignified standing and the opportunity to make herself felt? She believed that she was practical enough for both and that she had social gifts into the bargain. She had always felt sure that at a pinch she could write; she welcomed new ideas, and would be glad to take part in new movements.

Her first idea had been to live in Cambridge, but reflection had changed her mind. The old-fashioned wooden house which Mr. Avery had occupied for twenty years did not attract her. Its weather-worn exterior exhibited the depressing shade of brown one associates with soaked and faded autumn leaves which have lain long in the gutter. Within the upholsteries were dingy and worn. All might be refurbished from roof to cellar; but while she was estimating the cost she asked herself why she should prefer Cambridge to Boston. Cambridge was a suburb dignified by a seat of learning, but Boston was a literary centre and a crater of advanced thought. In Boston she would be in closer touch with the throes of progress and still remain, to all intents and purposes, under the shadow of Harvard College. Everybody had heard of Boston, but the identity of Cambridge was more hazy and was associated with mere book learning.

To her surprise and satisfaction Priscilla had eagerly favored the project from the moment it was broached. Move to Boston? Leave Cambridge and the accumulated rubbish of half a lifetime amid which he had fruitlessly dreamed? Nothing could be more desirable for her father. New surroundings and a clean, modern, enlivening domestic hearth would take him out of himself, and give him a fresh hold on life. Thus supported, the widow

found little difficulty in inducing her new lord and master to be pulled up by the roots. He was in an acquiescent mood and glad to sacrifice on the altar of his new happiness any conviction of his own which was not an essential —and to remain in Cambridge was not an essential. He submitted gracefully, and scarcely demurred to the final disappearance of most of his household gods in the vortex of removal. Some stacks of pamphlets and his books, which looked as though they had never been dusted, were banished to a side room to be known as his "den," to make space for lighter literature and knick-knacks. Yet there were limits to his forbearance, and he revolted when he missed *The Spectator* and *The Nation*, his only annual extravagance. They had been discontinued on the thrifty plea that for the same money all the popular magazines could be procured. "And you know, father," said Priscilla, who was present when her step-mother owned up to the substitution, "that the daily papers now have all the foreign news, and it isn't really good for you to read *The Nation*, which always says just the things you already have in your mind—most of them unpatriotic things, too."

From the first moment of the new relationship Priscilla had resolved to confound the traditional conception in regard to step-mothers. Most girls might detest or disagree with theirs; she intended to like hers and to meet her more than half-way if necessary. It did not prove necessary, for the second Mrs. Avery, evidently inspired by a similar sentiment, had shown herself maternal in her advances, so that the process of getting used to each other's peculiarities had been lubricated by reciprocal admiration. Mrs. Avery admired Priscilla's look of breeding and her high spirit which suggested both the disposition and the capac-

ity to make the world her football. Priscilla, on her side, was fascinated by her mother's optimism and practical sense. In shaking off the dust of Cambridge from her shoes and in establishing herself for the time being under the shelter of these new household gods, Priscilla believed also that she was completing her emancipation from the associations of her girlhood—associations against the spirit of which she had protested since she had first begun to reason; a spirit which, in spite of her struggles and her detestation of its workings, still seemed at times to hold her in its grip and compel her against her will to say and do things utterly at variance with her own philosophy. She had been brought up in an atmosphere of introspection and repression. She had been taught that it was fine and essential to finger one's happiness and ask questions about it instead of letting oneself go and taking what life had to give. The habitual attitude of her father and of all his friends had seemed to her that of criticism, shy restraint, and self scrutiny. Early in their intimacy she had confided to her step-sister:

"I'm not like that, and I don't wish to be. When I was sixteen years old, Lora, I made up my mind that I didn't intend to grow up dowdy and to poke along the streets as though my body were merely a sackcloth for my learned mind and my mind a—a distillery for doubts as to whether anything is worth while. I don't mean to be afraid or ashamed to show my feelings and to remember that the blood in my veins is red. What the world needs—our generation at least—is people who will do things with all their might, not dream about or cavil at them."

She felt sure, moreover, that she was not peculiar in fostering this creed of healthy-mindedness. The air was full of it. In the freemasonry of youth a single phrase or the

slightest act suffices to reveal affinity of thought, and she rejoiced at the discovery on every side of men and women of her own age who derived their inspiration from the thrill of a similar revolt; who believed with her that morbid introspection was a mildew eating at the heart of life.

Under the influence of this ambition, she had grown up frank and impulsive; and nature had played the part of an accessory to her purpose in providing the tall, shapely figure and handsome face of which she was resolved to make the most. On the streets of Cambridge she had, indeed, almost the air of a young Amazon, if only by way of contrast to most of her companions, and, though her father's marriage had taken place when she was only just eighteen, the discerning eye of the Harvard student had already singled her out as a coming belle. But the act of transplantation meant new life to her. It was no case of being pulled up by the roots, but of reaching out for a more congenial soil and wider horizon. Militant as she was, she recognized that Cambridge was no Jericho, the walls of which would fall at the sound of a trumpet. On the contrary, she was conscious that the members of the earnest but undemonstrative circle to which her father belonged looked at her a little askance and were disposed, when pressed, to criticise her as forth-putting, emotional, and too positive. Moreover, that the way she carried herself and the somewhat picturesque clothes she wore encouraged surmises as to whether she was serious-minded. It must be remembered that this was in the early eighties. Now it is said that Cambridge has even its fast set. But in those days it seemed to Priscilla that all her elders regarded life from a subjective point of view which imposed primness as a cardinal virtue on the rising generation,

most of whom lacked the courage, if they possessed the inclination, to throw off the yoke.

Priscilla had her own ideas, too, regarding Boston. It was only across the bridge; therefore, while she rejoiced at the change to a larger sphere, she had no expectation of being received with open arms. Some of the undemonstrative Cambridge friends of her father were more or less closely related to the people who lived on the water side of Beacon Street—the backs of whose houses formed a sort of sky line to a critical view from the University. These Boston people dressed better and had the reputation of being haughty, yet were they not essentially one with those she was leaving behind? Such was Priscilla's conviction gathered from many straws. There might be differences of administration, but her experience had already in store various evidences of the same spirit. It was the New England cast of thought which she abhorred as opposed to the new gospel which she carried in her bosom, and in crossing the bridge she understood that she was merely transferring her residence from one hotbed to another. Yet with this distinction. Boston was a great city and had always been the battleground of reforms. If its walls would not fall at the sound of the trumpet of Israel, at least she would be sure to find champions for a worthy and stimulating cause. The residents on the Back Bay might not choose to listen, but she had no doubt of meeting many who would.

Glad as she was to move to Boston, and certain as she was what she wished to do in the abstract, Priscilla had felt less clear concerning the immediate future. The lines along which she wished to develop were perfectly distinct to her mind, but the opportunities for action were not so obvious. For the moment the new house on Dartmouth

Street afforded an attractive shelter, but her strongest desire was to cease to be a source of expense to her father, especially as this would now be equivalent to living on the bounty of her step-mother. She intended to be married some day. Indeed her attitude toward love was a part of her protest against introspection. She had faith in her own capacity for passion, and she meant, when the time came, to put to shame those who, through coldness of nature or lack of vitality, paraded it as a starveling emotion. But until the time came she knew that a refined maiden must thrust into the background of her consciousness everything on this score but hope and the ideal creatures of her fancy. Her perfect knight might not present himself to woo for another five years, and meanwhile she must go her way as though men did not exist or were all the same to her.

This would have been easier had she been more certain that she possessed talent as an artist. Her ambition was to support herself by painting portraits which would win her fame and a competency. She had been clever with her pencil since earliest childhood, and this proficiency had been encouraged by regular instruction. But was the gift more than a pretty accomplishment? Here was one of the instances where her bringing up or heredity, whichever was responsible, was to blame. But for the critical faculty working within her, she would have thrown herself into her work and never questioned the outcome. To have complete faith was half the battle; and she chafed to feel that, notwithstanding her ardor, she was haunted by the spirit of doubt. Why had she been born with this imp in her bosom which persisted in thrusting forth his ugly head just at the moment when, lulled into confidence, she was on the point of believing herself a genius?

So, while she worked indefatigably at the art school, she asked herself from time to time what she should do in case she proved a failure as a portrait painter. For, though it angered her to feel that she distrusted her own powers, she comforted herself with the thought that there was no justification for poor art. To be other than in the first or second rank would offend her ideas of making the most of life from a practical standpoint. In case of disappointment her recourse would be to choose from the modern occupations open to women—nursing, teaching, or some kindred employment, and to throw herself into it with all her soul.

At just this time, during the first year after her father's marriage, she had attended the Artists' Festival. This was one of the first of those gay pageants given from time to time in Boston by means of which the art students seek to clothe the world for a night in the garb of a picturesque past. Subsequently these took place for a while in the Art Museum, but in the beginning a private studio in the rear of that building was dedicated to the purpose—almost opposite Mrs. Avery's house. On this occasion the fantasy selected was "Lalla Rookh, the lovely Princess of Delhi," who, on her long journey to become a bride, was beguiled by and fell in love with the poet Feramorz, only to find in him at last the King whose throne she was to share. Amid the throng of fire worshippers, fair maidens from the Vale of Cashmere, and other varieties of Eastern loveliness, Priscilla and Lora figured as a peri and a houri respectively. Priscilla's choice was made on the spur of the moment. "I'll be a peri," she cried impetuously, remembering the couplet which runs:

"One morn a peri at the gate
Of Eden stood disconsolate."

"What is a peri?" asked the practical Lora.

"I don't know exactly, but I like the sound. I intend to go as one, whatever she is."

The discovery that peris were the offspring of fallen angels did not alter her determination. Nor did it cause her to adopt a crestfallen demeanor on the night of the festival. As Lora, who had been looking up peris in particular and Eastern heroines in general, remarked, she resembled rather the proud daughter of a rebellious Caliph. In truth, under the spell of the occasion, the spirit of the East had entered into Priscilla's soul. She could not help being herself whatever her impersonation, but, as they entered the transformed studio, her imagination, aglow with the luscious imagery and romantic sentiment of Moore's poem, entertained a vision of what love might be—love outside of New England. She pictured herself some daughter of Araby or dark-haired Sultana listening for the forbidden footsteps of her lover, or, clasped in his ardent embrace, whispering sweet secrets to the music of the bulbuls. Then as she yielded herself to the glamour of her dream, she half believed that it was true—or, at least, that its complete and unfaltering rapture might prove an experience even in her own clime.

While thus exalted, she became aware that a young man, evidently a poet from his attire—besides, he carried a lute—was gazing at her with undisguised admiration. There was something in the expression of his eyes which brought comfort to her belief. They suggested a soul fearlessly eager to express itself, and which was centred for the moment on her alone. His thin, refined face indicated gentility and some pride. His nose was prominent and his cheek bones showed under his high Tartarian cap, but any effect of austerity was neutralized by his animated

glances and oriental costume. His vest, made of cloth from shawl goats, was confined by a flowered girdle over which hung strings of pearl, and on his feet were embroidered sandals.

Their eyes met, and presently he had spoken to her—without an introduction, and in Boston. Did this mean that he, like herself, had dismissed for this evening all knowledge of conventions and was ready to let himself go? It almost seemed so, such was his fervor and devotion. He never left her side, and though they talked gay badinage, his every word breathed the character of his disguise—that of a lover seeking his soul's idol. His name, he said, was Hafiz, and he had poetry at the tip of his tongue, the burning lines of Lalla Rookh, wherewith to proclaim his heart hunger for the peri of his choice.

Hafiz brought her cooling ices at the proper moment, and secured, by what seemed to Priscilla the display of consummate tact, the only nook in the studio where two could avoid interruption. From passionate symbols of the East, which became monotonous after a while, they turned presently to new world philosophy, though neither chose to break the charm of the hour by divulging a single clue to identity. Hafiz announced his allegiance to the ideal, and his sympathy with those ready to sacrifice life for a great principle—the Knights of Arthur's Round Table, the Crusaders, the heroes who had fallen in the Civil War. His voice trembled as he referred impersonally to these last; it was plain that he had precious associations with their valor. "Let us stand for truth in spite of the world!" he asserted with the mien of one blowing a bugle call.

The peri echoed his conviction, yet she chose to add: "Yes, but to act, not to dream; action—action—is what I adore."

Then, because it was late and most of the guests were already gone, the peri left her corner and bade Hafiz wait while she obtained her cloak. She was still under the spell of the East, and her spirit was skipping like a young gazelle. Lora, the houri, was also putting on her wraps, but without a word to her she rejoined her poet and said merely, "Come." She led the way down-stairs and paused a moment on the brink of the night. It was dark and raining; from where they stood they could see the glistening pavements and the moist rubber garments of the waiting cabmen. Priscilla's heart bounded at this complicity of the elements. She heard with joy her companion ask:

"What is the number of your carriage?" It was an anxious tone, as though at contact with everyday reality the ardent, spontaneous Hafiz was fading away like a ghost at cock crow.

"I have no carriage. Will you escort me home?"

"Certainly." Hafiz hesitated a scarcely perceptible instant, yet it was hesitation, as though some scruple held him back. "Where do you live? But do let me try to borrow an umbrella, Miss——"

Priscilla jumped to the conclusion that he was afraid of wetting his feet, and she glanced at his embroidered sandals.

"Steal one for yourself—but peris are not accustomed to umbrellas. For all you know, I live at the ends of the earth. Are you coming?"

"Yes, indeed. But will you wait one moment," he asked imploringly, "while I speak to my sister. I brought her here, and she will not know——"

"In the magic East, the land of true love, sisters count for nothing; nor are there New England consciences."

She threw the words tauntingly over her shoulder, and

sprang down past the amazed cabmen into the darkness. Across the street she sped like a gazelle, spurred on by laughing disdain, and wondering if he would follow. In another moment she realized that he was at her heels and running with all his might. She flew up the steps of her house into the vestibule and bolted the outer door. As she did so the shadow of his figure shut out the light of the street and she saw his face silhouetted against the glass as he tried the knob.

"Forgive me, forgive me," he cried.

"Too late, too late. You are no Hafiz, but an impostor."

This time it was not the peri who stood disconsolate at the gate of Eden.

As he rattled the door in vain, she heard him murmur with a groan: "This comes of being a Boston man!"

His confession was the echo of her own thought. Why should she be merciful? Had he not failed her at the critical moment and, by his mousy behavior, ruined the fabric of her dream? His sister, indeed! How exactly like a Boston man! She turned her latch-key noiselessly and slipped inside.

This had happened more than six months ago and he was the man whom now they were trying to persuade her that she ought to marry. Subsequent events had served to disclose that his true name was Henry Chippendale Sumner, and that he lived on the water side of Beacon Street.

CHAPTER III

PROFESSOR PATON took advantage of the moment when every one else was tasting the soup to reintroduce his hobby.

"Just to show how everything is turned topsy turvy out there, what do you think of this?" Then realizing that it was incumbent on him to make his example lucid to the only stranger at table he addressed Blaisdell. "There's a young man in the Senior class at Harvard named Chippendale—Chauncey Chippendale. He's one of the Brahmin caste of Boston, which means——"

The difficulty of expressing so much concisely caused the professor to weigh his words for an instant, and Mr. Drake suggested:

"That he lives on the sunny side of Commonwealth Avenue."

"That will identify him sufficiently for the moment. Out there he happens to be one of the most popular men in college, which, I admit, doesn't necessarily depend on ancestry even in these degenerate days. He was in the first ten of the 'Institute' and of the 'Pudding,' he plays quarter back on the football team, and he has systematically maintained a dead level of inferior scholarship, just sufficient to pull him through his examinations by the skin of his teeth. Now this young man happens to have a cousin named Henry Sumner, a capital Greek scholar, who——"

"Lives on the water side of Beacon Street," interjected Mr. Drake.

"And whom we hope to see here this evening," said

Lora, with a gleeful side glance at Priscilla, which Blaisdell did not fail to observe.

Mr. Paton chose to disregard these additional promptings which were not essential to his narrative. As a matter of fact, he was well aware that he had a more or less formidable rival for the hand of Miss Avery in the young man whose name he had just introduced, but he could be impersonal where a matter of principle was concerned. "Who has sympathy with scholarship, and who is, besides, sufficiently muscular and popular. He's well up on the rank list, and would seem to be the natural choice of any sane man looking for a capable assistant. Now what happens? A fortnight ago General Horatio Langdon, the banker, sent for Chauncey Chippendale and offered, out of a clear sky, to keep a position for him in his office until he graduates. And why, ye gods and little fishes, why? Because of that run which he made in the recent game with Yale. *Ergo*, idleness plus football is the recipe for commercial preferment in Puritan Massachusetts."

"Wasn't it magnificent!" exclaimed Priscilla.

"But for him Harvard wouldn't have scored!' said Lora.

"I can see him now," continued Priscilla, "slip round the end and tear down the field with three monsters at his heels trying to catch him, with everybody on the Harvard benches shouting like mad—and then when he hurdled the full-back and made a touchdown—it was just grand—grand, because he really did it and didn't fumble or throw away his opportunity. I think General Langdon was entirely right."

Blaisdell had pricked up his ears at the first allusion to the banker. It was clear now why there had been no room for him in that office, and he felt a mild curiosity

concerning the athletic hero for whom a berth was being kept warm. Intercollegiate contests were infrequent at his own college. He had played foot-ball occasionally, but he had never been on the eleven. The enthusiasm of the two girls entertained him and was convincing.

"I would have liked to see it," he asserted, as Priscilla finished her enthusiastic description, and he nodded at Professor Paton in a manner which indicated where his sympathies lay.

"But they say he was offside," said Mr. Paton.

"What a shame!" cried Lora. "No one thinks so, and the umpire decided at the time that he wasn't."

"The umpire admits that he wasn't looking, and I have the best of reasons for believing that Chauncey Chippendale took the chance—the chance of not being detected."

"But the umpire ought to have been looking," said Mrs. Avery. "And if he wasn't looking—that's a dreadful thing to say."

"Who was it told you that he played unfairly?" asked Priscilla with a frown. It was manifest that she thought she knew, and that she put the charge thus bluntly in order to emphasize her disbelief in it.

"Some one who had a good opportunity to observe." Mr. Paton spoke self-consciously, as though he understood what was working in her mind.

"I imagine I know who, and it's just like him. He may be a capital Greek scholar, but that's no reason why he should disparage such a splendid——"

Lora's amused laugh kept pace with this innuendo, while Mrs. Avery hastened solicitously to cut it short: "But, Priscilla, why jump to such a hasty conclusion? Professor Paton didn't mention any names."

"On the contrary, a lot of people are saying it under

their breath," volunteered Mr. Paton, "though most of them are rejoicing."

"That he wasn't found out? That's the way I feel," said Lora, clapping her hands. "I'm just thankful the umpire didn't see him."

"So am I," said her mother.

"And I," said Mr. Drake. "Because if he had, the coaches wouldn't be able to maintain the fiction that they never give secret instructions to slug and break the rules—if no one is looking. Butter wouldn't melt in the mouths of some of those coaches."

"Exactly," said Mr. Paton. "There's the truth in a nutshell. It's anything in order to win."

"But what's the proof that he *did* it? I don't believe that he did it," said Priscilla, emphatically. "Yale made the claim at the time and it wasn't allowed. So why shouldn't loyal Harvard men give him at least the benefit of the doubt? It was a glorious run—a magnificent exhibition of agility and endurance. Why, then, should people with no special qualifications for expressing an opinion prefer to take all the glory out of it? Mr. Paton didn't see the game and we did. I'll leave it to father, even, if we're not bound to take the hopeful view under the circumstances."

Mr. Avery put down his spoon and looked at his daughter with a gentle smile. "If I were a judge I should feel it my duty to acquit the defendant on the evidence. But," he added, with a twinkle in his eyes, "I know that you are always in search of the real truth, my dear, whatever you may allege to the contrary. An easy way to ascertain that would be to ask the young man himself."

"Ask him. He's well coached. Never fear," cried Mr. Drake.

Priscilla liked Morgan Drake. He had saturnine tendencies, but she knew he was honest. He had a lively way of getting at the root of things which, though at odds with her philosophy, was dignified by his own artistic devotion to his work. His present insinuation did not shake her faith, but it caused her instinctively to seek support elsewhere.

"You haven't told us yet what you think, Mr. Blaisdell. Am I not right?"

Fond as Blaisdell was of holding the floor, he had been content to listen to the discussion and thus take advantage of the opportunity to observe the members of the family circle to which he had been admitted. Since his last remark a pleasant, half humorous smile had lingered on his lips, affording to Priscilla, as she addressed him, a confident hope that his point of view would be vindicating or at least lenient. Her appeal was made to him just as he had begun to be conscious that he had remained silent long enough. He replied without hesitation; the words seemed to flow from the tip of his tongue as if inspired by confident conviction, and they were uttered, moreover, in a distinct, compelling voice which was hearty rather than melodious. Its cheerful, persuasive quality was no less adapted to banish doubt than is a west wind to dispel an ocean fog.

"I don't see the justice of trying to convict a man when the natural interpretation is altogether different. I've played football enough to know how excited one gets, and, as I look at it, what really happened was this: Chippendale, if that's his name, may possibly, in the heat of the game—possibly, I say—have been offside. But, if so, what reason is there for thinking that he was there deliberately? And granting, as in all fairness we are bound to,

that it was an accident—then it *was* the umpire's business to see him; and all supporters of Harvard ought to pat him on the back, and cry, 'noble work, old fellow.' It must, from all accounts, have been a star play, and other things being equal, it seems tough that he shouldn't get full credit for his brilliancy."

A murmur of approval ran round the table. The plausible enthusiasm of the speech caused Mr. Avery to look at him with new interest, and Morgan Drake to grin by way of tribute to what he defined to himself as its devilish ingenuity. As for Mrs. Avery, she sighed from joyful relief that all troublesome doubts had been suddenly swept from the room by a major force.

"There's nothing else left to say that I can see," she asserted radiantly. "It was an accident plain as can be."

"Of course, I can't prove that it wasn't," Professor Paton felt constrained to admit. He realized that he was worsted, and he turned in his chair to obtain a better view of the antagonist whose obvious ability was not lost on him.

Priscilla looked, as she felt, triumphant. "Thank you very much for coming to my aid," she said to her champion.

"I thought you were getting on very well as it was," Blaisdell answered. In spite of her beauty, it struck him that she had taken the whole matter too seriously—at least for a woman. Lora's attitude on the subject was much more to his taste. Though he had answered Priscilla's appeal, it was really her sister's cause which he was advocating. Realization of this led him to add genially, "But I was quite content to take my stand on Miss Burroughs's platform—one of thankfulness that the umpire didn't see him."

This robust statement was the occasion of more merriment, after which the topic was dismissed. But the dinner

proceeded gaily. Every one felt that the new boarder was an unusual person and an interesting addition to the household. When the ladies left the table, the men went to smoke in Mr. Avery's "den"—which was in the rear of the dining-room—small and overflowing with old books and pamphlets. The furniture, covered with faded green rep, was from the drawing-room of the Cambridge house. Mr. Avery lighted the coal fire in the small grate, and, while it was being coaxed to blaze by the aid of a blower, Professor Paton, standing with his back to the marble mantel-piece, smoking a cigarette, asked his host if he had any hopeful information to impart concerning the missing link.

Mr. Avery shook his head, but replied, "The machine still fails to work—to do what I claim for it; and that means discouragement so far as my friends are concerned. But I'm close on the secret; I feel sure of that; and may find it any day."

Blaisdell, taking for granted that the reference was to his visionary landlord's invention, inquired what the machine was expected to do.

"Manufacture electricity from coal," said Mr. Avery simply.

"A splendid proposition, isn't it?" exclaimed Professor Paton. "If it can be done, it opens a grand vista scientifically and—er—commercially. Suppose the energies of the coal, instead of escaping in the form of heat," he added, indicating by a tap of his foot on the handle of the blower the fire which had begun to roar up the chimney, "were to be drawn off as an electric current and made to drive engines instead—just think of the saving all round. It would tend to revolutionize modern industries."

"When the process works as it should, the blazing coal

will be practically cold; not the least degree of heat will be given out," explained Mr. Avery, and his eyes sparkled at the vision.

> "O, who can hold a fire in his hand
> By thinking on the frosty Caucasus?"

quoted Mr. Drake.

"Exactly; it contradicts contradiction. Bravo! Drake," cried Professor Paton, while Mr. Avery looked pleased by the appositeness of the Shakespearian analogy with which he was evidently familiar.

"That's a great idea, if it were perfected—great. There would be millions in it, I dare say," said Blaisdell graciously. But his inward comment was, "I guess the old man is a little doty." He was interested by the far-reaching consequences of the conception, but its very boldness —proceeding from such a source—inclined him toward scepticism. "How long have you been working on it—the machine, I mean?" he inquired.

"Fifteen years."

"Fifteen years!" Blaisdell did not attempt to conceal his amazement. Fifteen years was a huge slice from a lifetime. Surely in such a period it could be definitely determined whether any machine would work or not. He was more than suspicious now that his landlord was an impractical person. Nevertheless, his amiability prompted him to add, "I'd like some day to see what it looks like." He knew that the inventor had a workshop somewhere in the suburbs.

"There's not much to see; only a lot of jars and dynamos," replied Mr. Avery with his gentle, deprecatory smile. "It must be worked out here"—and he touched his forehead—"but time is all that is necessary; time—

and a little more money." He did not flinch from the last word, but it was evidently the one rueful factor in the otherwise serene prospect.

"Well, we must form a company and boom the stock," asserted Blaisdell. "Stocks are my business, you know. Going to be, that is."

Mr. Avery shook his head. He could scarcely have thought that this genial capitalist in embryo had anything definite in view, yet he evidently desired to prevent any misunderstanding on that score, for he said:

"My patents—when I get them—are mortgaged far ahead. The trouble with my experiments is that they are expensive. The machines are intricate to build and rather massive."

"Is General Langdon still favorably disposed?" asked Professor Paton, who could be inquisitive as well as friendly.

"Oh, yes. That is, the generous man doesn't refuse me when I have to apply to him. But it's philanthropy, not faith, which actuates his bounty. He's apt to be jocose; I'm one of his right-handed charities—which he doesn't let his left hand—his business hand—know about."

"But rumor says that his business hand generally manages to treble or quadruple whatever it gets its clutch upon," said Professor Paton. "That is one of the penalties—penalties I repeat"—and he tapped the blower again with his foot, "of becoming a successful banker."

"Besides, no rich Boston man ever spends more than half his income," said Morgan Drake. "That's why they're so disgustingly rich."

Blaisdell was content to be listening again. These sidelights on his surroundings were both illuminating and diverting. He set down the poet's sententious remark as pleasantry—a bit of poetic license. But he was interested

to hear about General Langdon, who was evidently a personage of greater importance than he had supposed, for his name seemed to be cropping up everywhere. It was obvious, too, what the banker thought of his landlord's efforts to extract electricity from coal.

"But I intend to convince him yet," said Mr. Avery. "He will live to see——"

The inventor's prophecy was cut short by the blower, which, loosened by the energy of the blaze in co-operation with Mr. Paton's boot, fell clattering on the hearth to the peril of the professor's legs. But Mr. Paton was spry and apparently used to such catastrophes, for he promptly reached for the tongs.

"Live to see all that fiery, untamed waste material utilized," he cried as, holding at arm's length the no longer prostrate blower, which was well-nigh red hot, he restored it to its stand beside the fireplace.

Shortly after this diversion Blaisdell heard the tinkle of a piano, which, perhaps, was a signal that they were dallying too long, for Mr. Avery almost immediately extinguished his pipe and suggested that they should join the ladies. As Blaisdell entered the parlor his eyes encountered those of Lora across the room. It was she who was at the piano and she was just about to sing. Indeed, as he stood in the doorway her fingers struck the keys, playing a jaunty air—a saucy air, to judge from the expression of her face—and she seemed to look straight at him.

"Young man, despair,
Likewise go to,
Yum Yum the fair
You must not woo.
It will not do:
I'm sorry for you——"

This was what she flung at him gaily, bewitchingly, and laughed—that same bubbling laugh. Was she making sport of him again?

"It will not do:
I'm sorry for you."

Why should she single him out? What was she trying to do? Blaisdell was conscious of feeling a little hot, but both his fancy and curiosity were stimulated. Was he to quail before a pretty girl with blue eyes and golden hair merely because she chose, for some unaccountable reason, to amuse herself at his expense? Surely not, and by way of fortifying himself in his own esteem on this score, he looked back at her unflinchingly, yet without disguising the admiration which she had aroused. Then as he stood his ground, it was her glance which suddenly dropped to the keyboard—the second time, as he remembered that she had abandoned the field in the moment of victory. But there was this to be said, the song was over.

His brain swimming, Blaisdell, joining eagerly in the applause, watched her as she rose from the piano stool and began to talk to those nearest her. Several guests had arrived, and there appeared to be a difference of opinion as to what she should sing next. He knew little about music, but the alluring rhythm of the selection to which he had just listened lingered in his ears, and he was eager for more. He was on the point of joining the disputants, which already included Morgan Drake and Professor Paton, when of a sudden he became aware that Mrs. Avery had snatched a smoking candle from the piano and was hastening toward him. Instinctively he opened the door for her and followed her into the hall where she instantly broke into resonant laughter as the result of having nearly collided with

one of her guests, a young man whom the maid had just let in.

"Why, Mr. Sumner," she cried, "we hoped you might come to-night. I dote on informality, as you know, so I'm on the way to snuff this candle while the others are choosing the next song. Leave your things in the 'den,' as usual."

While, notwithstanding her pose was that of a flying Mercury, she thus accorded an exuberant welcome to this newcomer, Blaisdell had a chance to observe that the visitor was very polite and rather agitated, as though his narrow escape from having been run down by his hostess had upset him a little. He was of good height with a spare figure. His thin, sensitive face was dignified by a large nose and prominent cheek bones which suggested that he did not eat enough. His expression in his sober moments —while he was endeavoring to apologize to Mrs. Avery— was not unlike that of an observant eagle, keen and a trifle austere. But when it lighted up under the influence of her confidential welcome, the ardor of his eyes became quizzical and the lines of his thin-lipped and rather ascetic mouth broke into a pleasant discerning smile. While he talked he toyed nervously with his soft, circular, gray, felt hat, which, clutched in his hand, looked not unlike a damaged squirrel skin.

"That," said Mrs. Avery to Blaisdell, when they were in the dining-room, "is Mr. Sumner—Mr. Henry Chippendale Sumner; a first cousin, by the way, of the Mr. Chippendale we were talking of at dinner. Since you're one of the family," she added in a whisper as she snuffed the candle, "and sure to discover it for yourself, I'll confide to you that he and Priscilla are great friends. He comes here to see her. He belongs to one of the first families in Boston."

"Lives on the water side of Beacon Street?"

Mrs. Avery gathered from this inquiry merely that her boarder was quick-witted. "Yes, between Berkeley and Clarendon; one of the small brownstone houses with ampelopsis running over it. His mother is a widow—his father was killed in the war at the head of his regiment, colored troops—and he has two sisters."

"My father was killed in the Civil War, too."

"Then I must introduce you to him right off. He's a senior at Harvard—graduates this year. I don't mean, of course, that there's anything in it yet, but there's no denying that he's pretty devoted."

"He can't be the only one. With two such daughters in the house, I should think you'd be overrun with devoted swains."

"They *are* pretty girls, I can't deny that," responded Mrs. Avery with a gracious nod, "and each in her own way; but," she continued, pausing on the threshold of the dining-room to add impressiveness to her words, "a Boston mother has always to remember that there are two hundred thousand more women than men in Massachusetts. Girls get kinks into their head. What Priscilla said about the New England conscience before dinner had reference to *him*." She pointed with the candle in the direction of the front stairs. "When Professor Paton told us at dinner that some one had accused Chauncey Chippendale of being offside, Priscilla suspected *him*. There, I'm letting you into family secrets."

"Then she doesn't entirely reciprocate his devotion?" asked Blaisdell gaily. Although he preferred Lora, it did not suit him to be denied by fate the opportunity for a more deliberate choice.

"She thinks she doesn't, but she does," answered Mrs.

Avery in his ear on her way through the hall. "He may be a little pernickety at times, but that's infinitely better in the long run than being fast."

Just at this moment Lora began to sing again, which drove every other consideration for the moment from Blaisdell's mind. Again the selection was of a bright, airy kind, but the sentiment was not satirical, nor did it lend itself to personal application. This time she did not seem aware of his presence, though he stood in the same spot as before and was feasting his eyes on her. It seemed to him that she sang entrancingly. The melody flowed as richly and spontaneously from her throat as the notes of a song bird. And how attractive she was! How pretty, how frolicsome, and how capable looking!

CHAPTER IV

BLAISDELL'S success up to this time had been with men. He had sought to attract the attention of his masters, and to put his best foot forward among his fellows, but young women were practically a sealed book to him. A book, however, which to judge from the binding, was to be handled with reverence. Yet the single peep inside which he had taken, on one of the few occasions in his life when he had met the other sex unreservedly, had served to convince him that they were human; he had squeezed a girl's hand on the spur of the moment at a church sociable and she had not resented it. From this one incident he had not jumped to a hasty conclusion, but it had led him to suspect that a deer-stalking policy was not invariably necessary in the case of courtship. Indeed, he had every

intention, in the event of his falling in love in the dim future, of wooing the maiden of his choice as openly and thoroughly as he was in the habit of pursuing the other objects of his interest.

This method was in keeping with his self-reliant nature. Therefore, with his single experience at the back of his mind, Blaisdell, as soon as the song was over, made a bee-line for the piano and mingled with the group which clustered about it. Lora now insisted that one of the other girls should take her place, and when she rose the new boarder was at her shoulder with a manifest intention of talking to her in his eyes. Observing that her favorite seat, the divan piled with cushions in the angle of the screen, had just been vacated by her successor at the piano, she hastened to establish herself there. Blaisdell, on the alert that no one should get ahead of him, promptly appropriated the rest of the sofa. Their position commanded the room, yet was in a measure isolated from it.

"What was that first piece you sang?" he inquired.

"From the 'Mikado.' Gilbert and Sullivan's operas are all the rage now. Did you like it?"

"It's as good as going to the theatre to hear you sing. You've a superb voice."

"But I was only strumming then—running through the score while you men were smoking."

"I listened to the words, too, and what I wish to know," said Blaisdell, regarding her fixedly, "is whether the young man took the advice. Did he 'despair and go to,' as he was bidden?"

Lora looked elated but a little confused. "Oh, that was a man's song—Pooh bah. You've heard of him, haven't you?" Her lisp always thrilled him.

"But there was a girl in it. He was cautioned not to

woo Yum-Yum. I'm interested to know what happened. I'm sure he married her in the end."

"Why are you sure?"

"Because the right sort of man would, if he dared."

"But suppose the girl didn't care for him?"

"She couldn't help herself. Come now, he did marry her, didn't he?"

Lora tossed her head in animated protest at the claim, but was obliged to admit that in the play it had so resulted. "That was in Japan, though," she exclaimed, and she began to hum blithely the words of the opening chorus:

"If you want to know who we are
We are gentlemen of Japan:
On many a vase and jar
On many a screen and fan——"

Blaisdell made no attempt to conceal that he was fascinated. On the contrary, he was content to have her know what was passing through his mind. She was so alluring and yet so direct. Her touch was bewitchingly light, and yet she invariably kept straight to the point, showing that she was practical withal.

"It's true anywhere, I guess, if a man's determined enough; if he sets his teeth and says 'I love her and I'll have her.'"

Blaisdell looked resolutely at Lora as he spoke. Yet he did not intend the words to convey more than an intimation that, in case he took it into his head to desire her, such would be her fate. This time she seemed amused rather than embarrassed by his demeanor. His assurance evidently struck her as diverting but preposterous.

"I see you don't know much about American girls,"

she exclaimed with coquettish glee. "I wouldn't put too much confidence in perseverance."

As Lora spoke the last words she glanced across the room at her step-sister and Mr. Sumner, who were absorbed in some discussion. The latter's expression was earnest, wistful, and a little diffident. Obviously Priscilla was his goddess and he was apprehensive of her frown. Just at the moment she was listening—listening interestedly, yet sternly; on the lookout—so it seemed to Blaisdell as he followed Miss Burroughs's gaze—to pounce on the opinion he was advancing and contradict it.

Lora said nothing, but Blaisdell divined from her roguish smile that they were a case in point before her own mind tending to illustrate the absurdity of his assertion.

"So that's the fellow whom Miss Avery suspected at dinner?"

"Mr. Henry Chippendale Sumner." Lora pronounced the words grandiloquently with her pretty lisp, as if she were proclaiming a royal title.

"He lives on the water side of Beacon Street and comes here to visit your sister."

"So mama has been telling tales out of school. Yes, he may be said to be somewhat partial to Priscilla; in fact, he may almost be said to be persevering, Mr. Blaisdell."

"But he stands in awe of her and lets her see it; and the next moment—look there—he rouses all her evil passions."

Priscilla was talking now and her eyes were flashing like one whose noblest sensibilities had been outraged.

"But he's obstinate, too, and never gives in, though he does stand in awe of her." Blaisdell's diagnosis of fear had evidently struck Lora as accurately droll, for she uttered one of her bubbling laughs. "Priscilla maintains that he is always pouring cold water on her aspirations. The few

times I've talked to him, however, he has seemed to me to have ideals on the brain. But Priscilla says his outlook on life is limited; she likes action—big things and going right ahead. All the same—for I guess he's kind and clever, and mama has discovered that his moral character is irreproachable—if I were in her shoes, I should try hard to like him. I should love to live on the water side of Beacon Street. I tell Priscilla that she isn't sufficiently appreciative of the compliment."

"The compliment?"

"Of being invited to mingle her blood with the sacred blue blood of the Chippendales. It's a good deal like the case of the Prince in the fairy tale and Cinderella—only I'm not a proud sister. The way they met, too, was deliciously romantic. Disguised at a fancy ball as a Persian poet, he singled her out from the throng and fell in love with her on the spot. What could Priscilla ask better than that?"

In spite of her gay tone Blaisdell understood that she was half in earnest. Moreover, her intimation that she would like to live on the water side of Beacon Street made that locality for the first time seem important to him. On his way home from the office on the previous afternoon he had made a detour through the so-called Back Bay. He had walked down the sunny slope of Beacon Hill from the State House, where the houses are only on one side, past the Common and along the sidewalk which skirts the Public Garden. Then crossing Arlington Street he had met the fresh west wind which blew in his face as through a tunnel, and followed the tall mansions of the long straight street without envy, yet with the eye of one who intended to be content sooner or later with nothing less dignified and substantial. These were the days of cold and formal

brownstone substantiality and stateliness, chiefly with lofty stoops and high-studded stories, mantled now and then with ampelopsis or dusty wistaria. At regular intervals through the short side streets, named in alphabetical sequence after famous political aristocrats of old England —Berkeley, Clarendon, Dartmouth—he saw almost within a stone's throw the gleaming surface of the river Charles on which the prosperous merchants who built there had turned their backs from fear of that northeast wind which has been described as themselves made flesh.

> "And now they sigh for an enchanter's wand
> To put their porches where their kitchens stand."

The lines were an impromptu effort on the part of Morgan Drake, who had a faculty for composing satirical couplets on the spur of the moment, when Blaisdell had subsequently alluded to his excursion.

He had been mildly interested by the Back Bay; the handsome private residences and the churches and educational buildings of the new district—the new made land, as it was called—were imposing and suggested a wealthy community. But they meant nothing to him. He expressed much more interest concerning the historic spots and monuments which he had visited in the course of the week. Indeed, his close observation in regard to these had first arrested Priscilla's attention. When he described graphically the old North Church, from the tower of which Paul Revere's friend hung the lanthorns, she was conscious of wondering whether she could find it unaided. She had visited it once somewhere at the North End. When he spoke of Copp's Hill Burying Ground, she flushed under the self-inquiry whether there were still a Copp's Hill and if so, where.

He had noticed new points of interest even in such hackneyed landmarks as the State House, Frog Pond and Bunker Hill, and had put her completely to the blush by asking, with a twinkle in his eye, what was on top of the vane on Faneuil Hall—an elementary question, it would seem. Neither she nor Lora had been able to answer it, however.

"A gilded grasshopper," was his response. "Plain as can be, if you only choose to look."

Priscilla then realized that she had never known, but her mortification yielded to enthusiasm. "How you do observe everything; the things which we all ought to see and don't!" she had exclaimed.

But now Blaisdell's acumen, whetted by Lora's remarks on blue blood, reverted to his walk through the Back Bay. Was there something he did not understand? At all events, such a point of view was to be ridiculed. "I guess the blood in this house is just as good as anybody's," he asserted.

Lora smiled indulgently. "That's polite, but it shows you haven't lived very long in Boston. We're not fashionable people. The people in this room"—and she cast a comprehensive glance around her—"are clever people and pleasant people, but nobody in particular. They're rather hard up, and the atmosphere we breathe is greenery yellery—the latest fad—half Bohemian, half literary. Mama and I are new—from the West. The Avery blood used to be deep blue, but the pigment has been diluted by years of close economy—low living and high thinking, Priscilla calls it. She declares she's almost a social albino, and she rather glories in the fact. But I don't. In short," she continued, egged on by Blaisdell's look of dissent, "we are odds and ends of society—social mongrels, if

you like. Aren't we social mongrels?" she asked, appealing to Mr. Drake, who came up at this moment. "By comparison, I mean. I'm trying to explain to Mr. Blaisdell what it signifies to be a Chippendale. I think I really know, but I've been here such a short time that I'm not sure I can express it."

Morgan Drake pondered a moment, tilting his wan, sympathetic face to one side. "We are the scum of the earth as compared with Chippendales. To be one means lots of things. But first of all, Blaisdell, being able to save half your income, as I told you up-stairs—and having standards. That's it, I rather think," he said, weighing his words, "standards. They live up to them. The standards may be narrow—heaven knows, some of them are—but they live up to them. It's pretty difficult for a newcomer to realize how Boston can be the hotbed of every fad in creation and at the same time the most conservative place under the sun. But it's true there are two kinds of Bostonians—people who are cantankerous because everything isn't just as it used to be, and those who are perpetually seething with something new."

"And the Chippendales are the old fogies, I dare say? The holders up of progress?" said Blaisdell, jumping to the conclusion that he understood.

Drake shook his head. "You would find both kinds in that family, as in nearly every other which counts for anything. No, it's the way each kind adheres to and insists on what it believes which distinguishes them. There's where their fathers lived—both kinds, side by side," he continued, waving his hand in the direction of Beacon Hill, "facing the sacred Common and the mid-day sun which poured in through their purple-tinted window-panes. And," extending his gesture toward the west, "there's

where they live now, on the new-made land, as we call it, because it's compounded of gravel, tomato cans, and old hoop-skirts. It's the same old point of view, though—only there are lots more people—and—but you can't understand," he broke off, "until you have lived here long enough to see us all up in arms over something the rest of mankind never heard of and cares next to nothing about."

Blaisdell assumed the description to be whimsical. Morgan Drake was evidently sardonically inclined; one of those literary fellows—so he concluded—who felt obliged to appear clever. Nevertheless, he accepted the description for what it was worth, and merely qualified his inability to understand by expressing the doubt to himself whether there was anything in it he would ever care to know. At the same moment Lora came to his rescue with the remark that he had already discovered more about Boston in a week than Priscilla and she knew together.

"Then he is just the man we need—some one with acute powers of observation," said Drake. "Your mother sent me over to organize a mind reading test."

Lora clapped her hands. "This is real Boston," she exclaimed to Blaisdell. "Priscilla is great at it. She will blindfold you and then make you do whatever she chooses. But you mustn't resist; you must just let your mind be a perfect blank."

"You could make me, and I shouldn't try to resist."

"Oh, you mustn't treat this with levity, Mr. Blaisdell. It's a serious matter—an occult force, some people think. I never could hypnotize anybody. I'm too matter of fact, I suppose."

"You've hypnotized me already."

"How silly!" Lora blushed and showed her dimples under his open determined gaze, but her words were indicative

of what was passing through her mind. Such exaggerated compliments on such short notice, however flattering, appeared to her ludicrous. Besides, instead of being disconcerted by her glances, as she had originally intended, here was this new boarder almost wooing her in a bold and brazen fashion. This would never do. "Listen now, mama is going to explain," she said with an air of command.

The girl who had succeeded Lora at the piano ceased playing "rag-time" the moment Mrs. Avery knocked, and an expectant lull fell upon the company. Mrs. Avery, with a pocket handkerchief in her hand, stated that the person to be experimented on must leave the room so as to be out of earshot of the discussion in regard to what he was to be made to do. Which of the men should it be? From her glances it was apparent that she was hesitating between Henry Sumner and Blaisdell. They were the only men present to whom the proceeding was a novelty, and it lay in her mind that, as the experiment was a result of a discussion which had been going on between Priscilla and her admirer, it might be wiser not to begin with him. He had expressed himself as sceptical of Priscilla's power to do what she claimed, and it was only fair to her stepdaughter to allow her to convince him if she could. Mrs. Avery was on pins and needles in her desire to harmonize their constantly divergent points of view. Mr. Sumner was so anxious to please—and yet he seemed to have the faculty of ruffling Priscilla the wrong way. If she would not take him up quite so sharply! Only a few days before she had expressed her feelings by saying, "If I didn't happen to please you as a man, I'm not sure that I wouldn't rather be a worm, dear." Now recalling Priscilla's evident liking for Blaisdell, she turned to him as an ally.

Besides, his good-humored, solid face suggested that he would enter into the spirit of the occasion and help them out, if necessary. To tell the truth, Mrs. Avery was not quite sure whether the performance was to be regarded as a game or an exhibition of magnetic force. The results which were accomplished were simply wonderful—they made her gasp; she could not explain them. Yet all she ever did was to hold the blindfolded person's hand while Priscilla held the other, and think hard of the thing to be done.

"Come, Mr. Blaisdell," she cried, "you're a fresh subject. You've never played it before, have you? That's splendid," she continued in answer to his assurance that he was entirely a novice. "It might be claimed otherwise there was collusion. Go into the dining-room, and we will call you when we're ready."

When Blaisdell returned in response to a summons from Morgan Drake, his landlady bound the handkerchief—a large one belonging to her husband—securely across his eyes. Then Mrs. Avery took one of his hands and Priscilla the other, each letting her fingers lightly clasp a wrist.

"Now the important thing is to think of nothing. Let your mind be an absolute blank," Priscilla cautioned him, and he heard Lora laugh explosively at this repetition of her own warning. The rest of the company was sitting expectantly around the room, partaking of chocolate with whipped cream, served in green Japanese cups without handles, and little home-made cakes with an aromatic flavor. Just before he was blindfolded Blaisdell had observed Henry Sumner paying close heed to the preparations with a quizzical smile. The eyes of the two men met and Blaisdell, who understood already that he was being used as a medium for confounding the young man who lived

on the water side of Beacon Street, felt the inclination come over him to do whatever was expected of him—what precisely he did not know. For Henry Sumner looked not only sceptically amused but lynx-eyed, as if resolved that nothing should escape him. Between a man who took a game too seriously and a woman, his sympathies turned to the latter, especially as the burden of proof was on her shoulders, whereas her opponent had merely to sit back and carp.

For the first few moments the trio remained stationary. Blaisdell tried assiduously to think of nothing as directed; but presently, losing his balance slightly, he shuffled his feet to the right, which was toward Priscilla. Before he regained his pose he felt drawn a few steps on that side. Again he remained motionless, and, as far as possible, both muscularly and mentally limp. The pause was so prolonged that Mrs. Avery began to breathe hard and ripples of suppressed mirth emanated from the audience. He was conscious from Priscilla's nervous touch that she was becoming agitated.

A moment later those looking on, who had been on the point of interrupting, became still, for the new boarder had begun to move. To glide rather, very slowly and with an occasional pause, yet unmistakably and under the influence, so it appeared, of some occult power. With Mrs. Avery's and her step-daughter's fingers still lightly holding his wrists, he went steadily down the room, pausing every now and then, yet persisting, until he was close to the piano. There he halted again as if not quite certain of the next step. Suddenly his hand went slowly up in the direction of the gas jet just behind the music stool and, hovering for a moment or two, touched the stop-cock. The next instant his fingers seized it and extinguished the

light. Immediately there was loud applause and laughter. He had done the feat which was expected of him, and in another moment Mrs. Avery's nimble fingers had loosened the knot and Blaisdell's sight was restored.

Priscilla regarded him jubilantly. "You were splendid," she cried. "You didn't offer the slightest resistance and we just willed you to do it. You felt an uncontrollable impulse to put out the gas, didn't you?"

"Everyone must have realized that." The hearty ring to Blaisdell's voice carried assurance. He was smiling, but his geniality suggested acquiescence not distrust.

"What have you to say now? How do you explain it, Mr. Sumner?" asked Mrs. Avery, turning to the sceptic for whose benefit the test had been undertaken.

"My opinion hasn't changed. Explain it? Why, of course, he was pulled."

The words were spoken with jaunty yet deprecating defiance, as if the speaker realized that he was asserting his personal spiritual conviction against his temporal interests and was at the same time a suppliant for mercy.

"I hold up my hand and swear I didn't move a muscle," protested Mrs. Avery.

Priscilla had stiffened at the charge. "It's simply absurd," she retorted. "I appeal to Mr. Blaisdell. I ask you, Mr. Blaisdell, if you were conscious of the slightest pressure being exerted on you at any time by either of us?"

"Not the slightest," said Blaisdell, without hesitation, and he looked Sumner beamingly in the face.

"Miss Avery pulled without being aware of it. The pressure was involuntary. I meant to say that in the beginning."

"But if neither of us were aware of any pressure, what proof is there that any existed?" asked Blaisdell, and per-

ceiving his opportunity, he added, "You claim, I suppose, that because you can't see how the thing is done—because it transcends your experience—the explanation must be collusion or self-deception. Is that quite fair? There are all sorts of mysterious powers about us which we don't understand, and in trying to penetrate them we now and then get a glimpse of their workings. Isn't this one of those glimpses? That seems to me the broader view."

There was a murmur of sympathetic approval as he paused.

"Well put, young man," said Mr. Avery who, returning from a second pipe in his den, had listened to Blaisdell from the threshold.

"If we're not careful, he'll persuade us that black is white," whispered Morgan Drake to Professor Paton.

"I just knew I didn't move," said Mrs. Avery gaily. "It's mesmerism—of course, it's mesmerism."

"Thank you, Mr. Blaisdell," said Priscilla. "You've supplied us with just the right phrase—'the broader view.' Mr. Blaisdell has an open mind," she asserted with a derisive courtesy to her admirer. It was plain that she rejoiced at what she regarded as his discomfiture; her cheeks were bright with the glow of triumph.

"Mine seems the narrower view because I can't prove that it was self-deception. Which only shows——"

"That you think you know what is going on in my mind better than I do myself."

"Not altogether; and yet——"

"In this particular case you are convinced of it, because you are not willing, as Mr. Blaisdell says, to countenance any explanation which savors of wonderland. My answer is that the fault lies in your own lack of imagination."

"She accuses you of being a literal Bostonian," explained

Morgan Drake. "Of the Brahmin caste," he whispered in Lora's ear under cover of the laugh which his sally elicited.

"And if I am—why, to be honest with one's self is often one of the most difficult things in the world."

Priscilla's eyes flashed. "But that's an insult to the intelligence."

"You know well—" he began, horrified evidently by the effect of his own presumption. Then realizing doubtless that he was in danger of floundering, he stopped short. "Let me try," he said. "If you succeed with me, I will believe," and he held out his hands.

"She is lost," Lora confided to Morgan Drake. "She knows in her heart that she exerts pressure unconsciously, but she will never admit it." The point which was uncertain to practical Miss Burroughs was what Blaisdell thought of the whole affair. Was his plea one of credulity or partnership?

"Where is the handkerchief?" asked Mrs. Avery solicitously, eager for the test.

But Priscilla stood irresolute like one seeking a valid excuse for evading a challenge.

"Has Mr. Sumner an open mind?" asked Blaisdell, springing into the breach. "Will not his lack of faith necessarily prevent the mysterious force from working? I was cautioned by Miss Lora before I began"—and he looked intently in her direction—"that the essential thing was not to resist and to let the mind be a perfect blank. The point is whether, under all the circumstances, his mind would be capable of becoming a perfect blank."

"And he would be certain to resist," cried Priscilla, rejoicing that her native honesty had been provided with a legitimate argument. "He could not help resisting."

"That young man will be heard from later—mark my words. He has the gift of gab, if nothing else," said Professor Paton to Mr. Avery.

"I promise not to resist, and my mind shall remain blank as a sheet of paper." Sumner spoke with engaging candor.

Priscilla, having found her cue, was at ease again. "The resistance would be unconscious, of course." Then an inspiration seized her, and she added, "You may try, if you like, but it would be no use."

This was evidently the opinion of the company, unless it were Mrs. Avery, who, anxious to propitiate Henry Sumner, hastened to tie the handkerchief over his eyes.

"Come, Mr. Blaisdell, you and I will be the accomplices this time," said Priscilla. "We challenge him to detect the slightest pressure."

Each took a wrist, and the experiment began. All three stood motionless. For a few moments they were given the benefit of a complete silence. Then, as they continued to stand like figures in a tableau, everybody began to laugh. The next instant Priscilla dropped Sumner's hand.

"I told you it would be no use. You resisted all the while. I could feel you resisting." So saying, she summarily untied the knot, and the handkerchief fell from his eyes.

"I assure you"—Sumner started to protest.

But Blaisdell cut him short. "The trouble was, you were saying to yourself every moment that you wouldn't resist, which was just as bad. Your mind wasn't a perfect blank, so it was not possible for us to succeed. You were really antagonistic in every fibre of your being."

This uttered jocularly was at once accepted as a clever finale to the diversion, which had lasted long enough.

Two or three guests made their adieus to Mrs. Avery; the hour was getting late.

"Antagonistic in every fibre of your being." Priscilla, radiant, echoed the apt phrase. "That exactly described your state of mind, Mr. Sumner." The smile which she accorded her admirer was made up both of exultation and the agreeable consciousness that she was demonstrating how narrow he was.

Some one again was playing "rag-time" at the piano, and there was a loud murmur of leave-taking. The victim realized that the opportunity had been denied him to reply to Blaisdell's trenchant diagnosis. He understood that the easy-going readiness of his opponent was what had won the sympathies of the audience—but it was his nature to feel disturbed that the eternal verities as he saw them should be obscured. Yet reluctant as he was to abandon the field, his disappointment yielded forthwith to the joy of being able to confine his attention to her who was responsible for his presence in this semi-Bohemian drawing-room. For he found himself alone with Priscilla once more. Blaisdell had slipped away to Lora's side and everybody else was occupied. Thereupon, undeterred by his lady-love's air of triumph and ignoring her taunt, he tremulously put into words the formula which he had been treasuring up all the evening as a parting speech.

"Shall you be at home to-morrow afternoon?" And he added, "There is something particular which I wish to say to you."

As he spoke Sumner was painfully conscious that his words were excessively common-place and that his manner was egregiously wooden. He knew his heart to be a volcano, and he intended his language to convey so much, and yet he stood talking in a diffident, cut and dried sort

of way, as if the subject-matter which he had in mind was as far removed from passion as a lecture on economics. He perceived that she understood—which increased his perturbation and added to his distress. Would she think him indelicate for speaking so soon? Was she unprepared for his avowal? Curiously enough, this bogy bobbed up in his mind side by side with the depressing conviction of his own stiffness and served to heighten the apprehension of his demeanor. What would he not give for the power to impart to his voice and eyes the ardent language of his heart! Even in the disguise of an Eastern poet he had been weighed in the balance and found wanting. He lacked the gift of expression. Or was it—could it be that he did not really care? That others were able to feel more deeply than he? The sudden thought was like a stab, for Henry Sumner's creed in life was never to avoid facing the truth. A fire worshipper! Would that he possessed even the engaging ease of his cousin, Chauncey Chippendale, or could borrow for the occasion the fluent, stalwart assurance of his late opponent in the mesmeric test. A vivid vision of how differently this dominating newcomer would conduct himself in similar circumstances haunted his mind's eye as a final figure in the swift train of impressions which darted through his sensitive brain while he waited for Priscilla's answer. "I'm an awkward goat," he subconsciously murmured. Sumner was prone to sardonic mental soliloquy at his own expense. His critical cast of mind was never lenient toward himself.

There was an appreciable moment of waiting. Priscilla's heart beat fast as the result of his words. She could not doubt what was in his mind in spite of the formal little bow which accompanied the announcement, as though he were planning to ask her to dance the German instead of

to become his wife. But his eagle glance—subdued so as not to violate conventionalities, yet eagle—negatived his deprecating, almost timid, air. For months she had been refusing to believe—declaring as preposterous when it was broached by her family—the idea that his attentions would culminate in anything desperate. Was not caution the ruling motive of his life? Only a week before, when badgered by Lora on the subject, this had been her comment:

"If you wish to know, the real trouble with Henry Sumner is that he lacks genuine enthusiasm. If he offered himself to a girl, it would be because he had worked himself up to it in spite of her faults. I won't have the man whom I accept for better or for worse love me in a lukewarm, apologetic fashion. He shall think me an angel and be unaware of my shortcomings."

This argument was very convincing now, so why was it that her heart beat so quickly? As Hafiz, the first evening of their acquaintance, he had shown himself lukewarm and inadequate as a lover. What had he done since but pour cold water on her most cherished inspirations and contradict her at every turn? The very fact that she appeared to be tolerating for a moment the possibility of listening to his suit irritated her, so that she drew her tall figure to its height and regarded him—so it seemed to her—disdainfully. Yet the words which she coldly uttered were:

"I expect to be at home to-morrow afternoon after five o'clock."

CHAPTER V

As Henry Sumner strode away from the Averys's he repeated to himself the trite but dashing lines:

> "He either fears his fate too much,
> Or his deserts are small,
> Who dares not put it to the touch
> To win or lose it all."

His family would be startled by his choice. His mother and two sisters were aware of his interest in Priscilla, but they had no inkling of his purpose to ask her to become his wife. She was not one of their own set. As for his relatives, the Chippendales, they would be shocked. He was used to shocking the Chippendales, and he was aware that they, though fond of him, viewed him askance, fearful what he would do next. A speech of his cousin Chauncey's, who was in the same class at Harvard, had reached his ears—"Henry Sumner is in his way one of the most interesting fellows in college, but one of the biggest cranks in creation." Chauncey was an authority on social matters out there; his word carried weight, for he had been "first man" in the leading societies and was prominent on the foot-ball team. Henry had been taken into the "Institute" on the strength of this qualified endorsement, but in one of the last tens, as was fitting in the case of one who had a way of criticizing the established order of things.

Henry Sumner's development thus far had been chiefly on the side of conscience and subjective ideals. He was not an ascetic, for he displayed a healthy appetite. Moreover, he had no trace of effeminacy. On the contrary, he enjoyed regular exercise, and possessed a spare, muscular

frame, which rendered him a formidable competitor in every-day sports. But his ruling passion thus far had been duty—duty relieved by entrancing visions. The bright particular star which led him on was his father's memory—his father, who had fallen at the head of his command in order to free the slave and to save the Union, when Henry was but a mere child. Colonel Sumner's picture—a young man in regimentals, alert and handsome—looked down on him from the wall where his eyes could rest on it every morning when he awoke. To do well in his studies, so that he might later become a credit to his family and follow in his father's footsteps, was the line of conduct he had laid out for himself. Not necessarily on the field of battle—for, according to his code, war was a deplorable accident, though it might prove a glorious opportunity. But was it not possible to follow worthily in any path where unselfish and untiring endeavor would result in helping on the work of the world?

This was the question he had asked himself when, under the spell of Professor Paton's enthusiasm for Greek, it occurred to him to devote his life to scholarship. Why, in pursuing erudition under the shadow of the Harvard elms, would he not fulfil his obligation as a Sumner and a Chippendale? It would be aloof from the madding crowd, but not so remote that his ears would be unable to detect the accents of falsehood, or his mind's eye fail to recognize a great opportunity for action. There was money enough. That is, his mother was able to live comfortably and to provide for his sisters on what she possessed in her own right, added to what his father had left. His own share was sufficient to support him decently as an instructor at Harvard—Professor Paton had intimated to him the likelihood of such an employment—even though

married. Even though married! This was an essential proviso, for the two ideas, embodying the choice of a career and of a wife, had come to him simultaneously. So his duty had suddenly amalgamated with the most entrancing of his visions and he had caught a glimpse of a future satisfactory to both.

It will thus be perceived that Henry Sumner was a dreadfully serious young man. Moreover, his seriousness was not limited to the domain of duty, but colored all his estimates—and, in particular, his estimate of the other sex. It should here be stated that the entrancing visions which he entertained from time to time chiefly related to woman —maidens of a marriageable age. Woman as he saw her in the abstract was human to be sure, but akin to the angels. Her purity, her unselfishness and her marvellous intuitions set her on a pedestal which brought the skirt of her dress about the height of his lips, so that, figuratively speaking, he was perpetually kissing the hem of her garment, and was, in his own opinion, quite unworthy to tie her shoe-strings. However, it would have embarrassed him very much to have been suddenly invited to do the latter, for he was rather clumsy with his fingers and his ideas of propriety would have made him tremble. But complimentary as this was, the entrancing vision thus formed in the morning of his youth, as to the sort of person his wife was to be, might be described as a little frosty. Ambitious himself at this time to become an abstraction of all the virtues, he demanded something even superior for her, and when he ventured to lift his eyes toward her metaphorical person, he beheld a halo upon her brow reflecting the white light of divinity.

When his eyes met for the first time those of Priscilla Avery, he realized that he had found her—the woman he

had been in search of. Not deliberately, not avowedly in search of, of course, but fervently. There she stood in the flesh, the prototype of the being of his fancy; in the alluring garb of a maiden from the vale of Cashmere to be sure, but unmistakably corresponding to his ideal. His own disguise had enabled him to gaze more boldly than his wont. His high Tartarian cap and other fantastic habiliments, instead of increasing his diffidence, had cured his self-consciousness for the time being and given rein to his tongue. He had wooed for the moment in a fashion worthy of the name, and her glances had assured him that his devotion was acceptable. Transported and rejoicing in his ease, he had forgotten everything—chief of all himself, until, in a fatal moment—the crucial moment of the evening as it had proved—his New England conscience had reminded him that he was the escort of his sister and must look after her. Then at the breath of duty the fabric of his vision had been rent and his divinity had slipped through the aperture. Lamenting—yes, cursing—his fate, he had chased her down the steps across the street only to have the front door slammed in his face. And she had never forgiven him. He had never been the same to her. But she had remained the same, and was the same to him—transcendently, ineffably the same. Though his boldness and power of expression had vanished with that evening, and he was reincarnated again as the cold and critical Bostonian he knew himself to be—he lacked neither determination nor hope. The memory of that delicious evening lingered. She was the woman of his choice—the only wife in all the world for him—and he was resolved to win her. So he had vowed on the morning after the catastrophe, and so he had been saying to himself every day since. He had courted her assiduously—as devotedly as

she would permit him. He had lent her books and sent her costly flowers. In one of various efforts to persuade her that he was really a volcano in spite of appearances, he had watched at midnight the light of her bedroom window from the shadow of the Art Museum until she extinguished it—and told her so. He had danced attendance on her every wish and yearned to kiss the very ground she trod upon, and yet—and yet, in spite of all, he had reason to fear that he had failed to recover the lost ground. She had never looked at him again as on that first evening. Moreover, he had somehow managed constantly to contradict and irritate her. Of a sudden all her opinions had seemed to be contrary to his. He had only to express one, to find her on the opposite side, yet—was it not a man's duty to stand up for what he believed to be the truth? Duty again! Duty once more had him by the throat; duty had stepped in a second time between himself and happiness. He had tried to suppress himself, to hold in check the protesting arguments which would rise to his lips in spite of his love and work to his undoing, and he had been unsuccessful. Why was it that he must always relentlessly champion the truth to the utter hazard of his most precious happiness?

"It was only a game. I needn't have been so stiff. Why didn't I enter into the spirit of it like that fellow Blaisdell? He knew just as well as I that she was deceiving herself. But I can never make believe."

Sumner sighed at the end of his soliloquy. He would ask her at any rate, declare his love at her feet; and, if she refused him, go on loving. At least, she had granted him an audience. Must she not have gathered his meaning? She had given him the opportunity to pour out his soul in her presence and that was something. Was it not a hope-

ful sign, suggesting that her mind was not yet steeled against him?

Thus reflecting, Sumner proceeded along Dartmouth Street, and crossing Huntington Avenue and Boylston Streets, hastened toward his home. Despite uncertainty as to what the morrow would bring forth, he walked with a springy step, for the fresh northwest breeze which blew in his face was as a tonic to his blood. It was a strong and honest wind, which he loved even in the rigor of winter; an ally it ever seemed to him of hardy and open living, a foe to sloth and murkiness. He loved to battle against it, and to-night when it assailed the skirt of his thin ulster and caused him to press his little round gray hat more closely to his head, he expanded his lungs vigorously like one who would renew his strength. As he walked his nervous figure seemed the embodiment of energy, but he was far from sartorially picturesque. Absorbed in his desire to become an abstraction of all the virtues, dress beyond the point of sufficient neatness was not interesting to him. To change the cut or sober color of the garments to which he had become accustomed was something he invariably shrank from. For the first few moments in his fancy dress —he had gone to the Artists' Festival to please his sister— he had felt like sinking through the floor from the conviction that he was making a garish fool of himself. This was the result of taking a peep in the drawing-room mirror in Beacon Street. Yet, strange to say, on his arrival at the studio, he had become bold as a lion, joyful that for once he had left himself at home.

Mrs. Sumner's house was of brown stone and formal looking, with tall windows guarded by a stone balcony, and a flight of brownstone steps. It was substantial looking, but inconspicuous, being less wide than some in the

same block—as became a widow with three children—who was comfortably off, but had no husband to increase the family possessions. Her ambition was to live like a lady without ostentation, which met with the approval of her brother, Harrison Chippendale, who was the trustee both of the small fortune which Colonel Sumner had left and of his own patrimony. Of course she must, as a Chippendale, live with dignity, but within her means. Therefore it was eminently fitting that she should occupy a house which could fairly be described as modest in comparison with his own on Commonwealth Avenue. This was an august looking mansion, but relieved by a few light touches, revealing that the architect who had planned it was trying his 'prentice hand fresh from Paris at the risk of being accused by those who set the fashion of a lack of seriousness of purpose. Harrison Chippendale had the reputation in the family of being a progressive person, though to the world at large he appeared a hide-bound conservative. Flighty was the word his brother Baxter was fond of applying to him by way of stricture on his occasional coquetries with progress. Baxter, who was still a bachelor, and their maiden sister Georgiana, continued to reside in separate establishments not far from the State House, preferring the old-fashioned plumbing of Beacon Hill to the moral earth-slides which they associated with the new-made land. When Harrison had moved down to the Back Bay, and induced Eleanor Sumner to do the same, they had regarded the departure as a sign of undue restlessness—a speculative venture which only confirmed them in the growing belief that their brother was inclined to be extravagant. They had begun to suspect that he was spending his entire income. When Baxter, who was a portly, thickset man, with a bald head and reddish brown side

whiskers, beheld the new house with its light colored facings, he grunted by way of passing judgment upon it, and next day examined the records at the Registry of Deeds to ascertain the size of the mortgage.

Henry Sumner's mother was sitting up for him. Not in order to know at what hour he came home, but because her affection was provided with an excuse for listening for the stamping of his feet on the door-mat. Besides, she was absorbed in a French novel, which she had been able to read uninterruptedly after sending her daughters to bed. Eleanor Sumner was a refined, delicate looking woman, slim like her brother Harrison—a regular Chippendale in appearance—whereas Baxter and Georgiana resembled their mother's family. So frail was her physique that people declared at the time of her husband's death that she would not survive him long. Yet she had lived; and though her figure continued to suggest that a breath would blow her away, her friends had learned to regard her as tough—which indeed she was—for her nervous system had the flexibility of steel. She possessed repose of manner and daintiness in her personal ways. She spoke French better than her daughters, though, unlike them, she had never been abroad until after her marriage, and her handwriting had a flowing, graceful distinction—shared with a few of her social acquaintance who had been similarly taught—very foreign to copy-plate precision or ill-rounded slovenliness. She had mourned for her husband so truly and so long that she had not yet reached the point when she felt that she could wear colors again. She would wait until the wedding day of one of her children. In the meantime she wore plain silk, the blackness of which was relieved by a flowing gold chain to control her glasses.

"Why, mother dear, are you still up?"

"It's only just twelve."

"Another orgy of French novels in the stilly night," he said playfully, and, stooping to ascertain what she was reading, kissed her fondly on the cheek.

Though eager to hear where he had spent the evening, Mrs. Sumner displayed superior maternal tact by restraining her curiosity.

"Your Uncle Harrison has been here. He was disappointed at not finding us both. We talked—about money matters."

"Money matters?" A sense of alarm mingled with sudden self-reproach succeeded Henry's astonishment. There was evidently exceptional meaning in his mother's words, or she would not have broached a subject rarely referred to between them, except on the quarter day when his share of the income from the trust fund was paid over to him. He had seen fit to leave everything to her—or rather, to his uncle, in whom he had implicit confidence—and to remain deliberately uninformed concerning the state of the family property. He had but the vaguest idea as to how much it was and as to how it was invested.

"Is there anything wrong?" he asked.

"It's something about the Warrior Mills. It appears they haven't earned as much as usual, and the family own a good many of the shares. The dividend has been cut in halves, and your Uncle Harrison intimated that we shall have to be more careful what we spend. But he thinks women do not understand business matters, and he wishes to talk to you."

"I will go to see him to-morrow. Why, I supposed we were rich, mother. I took for granted——"

She understood from his look of dismay that he was

heaping reproach upon himself, and putting out her hand, she drew him down beside her on the sofa within the influence of the smouldering fire. "I don't understand that it is serious; he hopes the reduction is only temporary. It's my fault, dear, not yours, that you are ignorant of our affairs. I wished you to drink as long and as deeply as possible at the Pierian Spring without distraction from practical concerns. Besides, your uncle is the head of the family and has our interests at heart."

"But a man at my age has no right not to know how his own money—to say nothing of his mother's and sisters' money—is invested. I have been a dolt—a dreamer."

"I loved to have you dream, and you will never be a dolt. But perhaps the time has come for you to take your father's place."

Henry winced, then threw up his head proudly. He glanced around the cosey room, as if he were making a new inventory of his surroundings. Two low reading lamps threw soft light on the rich red rug, on the deep blue upholsteries and the yellow and black curtains, on the young Augustus in marble and a flying Mercury in bronze. The latter figure had ever seemed to Henry to personate the desire and the power to aspire.

"But, mother, I sometimes think I have the clumsiest mind of any man alive!"

Her intelligence divined that such complete self-disgust had not been evoked solely by what appeared on the surface. Again she restrained herself from asking, "Where have you passed the evening? At the Averys's?"

From several indirect sources she had learned of his friendship with Priscilla, and, though it had never occurred to her that he was thinking of marrying the girl—he was too immature for so serious a step—she suspected that his

heart was temporarily engaged. Therefore, though she bridled her tongue, her smile was almost arch. "You can scarcely expect me to assent to that. To underrate one's self is almost as fatal as the other extreme. In the morning you will view this matter less tragically." So saying, she swept back his forelock which hung low on his brow —he had been dilatory in having his hair cut—and looking into his eyes kissed him. "Go to bed, you conscientious boy!"

When, on entering the house he had found his mother alone, it had occurred to Henry to give her a hint as to what the morrow might bring forth and invite her blessing on his hopes. But his uncle's words had not only opened his eyes to his own neglect, but thrown a new shadow across his matrimonial prospects. Could he afford to marry? This would be made clearer after he had conferred with his uncle. Consideration of this point, however, he thrust sternly aside, though conscious of a pang—his tense air betrayed this—because his keen sense of duty was quick to perceive that it might clash with an absolute obligation. This obligation he now felt a glowing need to define in words before he said good-night, since it gave him an opportunity to trample ruthlessly on his own happiness.

"If it is necessary to be careful what we spend, it must be I, not you, mother. I shall not allow you to change your mode of living. I will go to work and make money. That, you know," he added with an exalted smile, "is what my father would expect me to do."

Mrs. Sumner did not contradict her son. She understood his mood and that it would be useless to oppose him at the moment even if she desired to do so. She was proud of him, too; his joy in his self-sacrifice reminded her of her husband—there was the same eager sensitiveness to

the call of duty. And was he not right? If the family income were curtailed, the burden of supplementing it should fall properly on him, even though he might be transformed from a scholar into a man of affairs. The girls were not yet married—they might never be—and at least, it was important for their sake to avoid serious economies. As to Henry's flirtation—if there were anything serious in that—might not this interruption be the welcome means of nipping it in the bud?

"I see your side; but we won't, my dear boy, discuss the matter further to-night," she said, rising from the sofa and extinguishing the lamp nearest to her. "And avoid deciding anything in your own mind until you have talked with your uncle."

She was fond of analyzing her mental processes, and when, later, in her chamber she viewed these reflections, she ascribed them to the workings of the Baxter blood—her mother had been a Baxter of Salem—for the Chippendales were, in their own estimation, essentially idealists. Had she herself not plighted her troth to the colonel of a negro regiment? But she saw no reason to regret that she had let Henry perceive that she was not certain to refuse his utilitarian sacrifice. He was as the apple of her eye, and his rectitude delighted her, but obviously he stood in need of practical training. Nor was she averse to have him think twice before he decided to immure himself as a Professor of Greek. She had not frowned on that inclination—on the contrary, she had been proud of his impulse to become a scholar—and yet she wished him to be sure that his ambition would not later feel itself circumscribed by the choice. Would his transcendental proclivities be satisfied by a life of research and contemplation?

Henry Sumner went to see his uncle the following day

in time for luncheon. In Boston it would not be necessary to describe the lineage of either Mr. or Mrs. Harrison Chippendale. All simon-pure Bostonians know their genealogies by heart. But we are not all simon-pure Bostonians. Harrison Chippendale, the great-grandfather of him whose family tree we are about to gaze at, was a coppersmith, now and then euphemistically referred to by his aristocratic descendants as a worker in precious metals. In this country conditions shift so rapidly, as we all know, that it is nothing uncommon for a mender of pots and pans in one generation to be dining off gold vessels in the next. But gradual ancestral progress, such as that which we are called on to consider, is more convincing. The second Harrison, starting as a clerk, presently became a supercargo, who made long voyages to China and the Indies and laid by something for a rainy day. This, in the grip of his son of the same name, became a fortune—as fortunes were estimated at that day. He was one of the successful merchants of his time—this father of our Harrison—a pioneer in cotton and woolen manufacture and an underwriter of maritime insurance risks on State Street. His wife, a Miss Baxter of Salem—what more need be said than this?—was the daughter of another money-bags who was part owner of a flotilla of clipper ships on some of which were brought home the stock of choice Madeira found in his wine bins.

The children of this couple were four in number: Harrison, Eleanor, the widowed mother of Henry Sumner, Georgiana and Baxter, who, like his sister, had remained single. Their inheritance, which came to them snugly invested in the shares of New England factories, insurance companies and banks, had amounted in all to some $1,000,000, about $250,000 apiece, and served in the opin-

ion of their contemporaries to place the fortunate possessors high in the class of those privileged to live on the income of their principal.

Of Harrison it may be said that to his friends and acquaintances there was no more courteous gentleman in town. He was not demonstrative; what simon-pure Bostonian is? But he was uniformly urbane, if dignified, in the society of people whom he knew. Toward strangers his instinctive attitude was one of reserve; social caution it may be termed. If, at the fashionable club to which he belonged, he beheld a stranger, he would, perhaps, not actually scowl, but at the first opportunity, he would be sure to inquire behind his newspaper, "Who is that?" in a tone which said only too plainly "What the devil is he doing here?" Doubtless constitutional diffidence had much to do with this aloofness of demeanor, for Mr. Chippendale was by no means lacking in hospitality and good fellowship on other occasions; but shyness affects different people in different ways. An unwritten—perhaps an unconscious—law of his being was that he did not care to know many people. Did he not know intimately the best in Boston already?

On the other hand, Mr. Chippendale was not untravelled. As a young man after graduation from Harvard he had "seen" Europe and had then acquired what he, at least, regarded as a knowing familiarity with the institutions and customs of France by persistent reading of French novels, a hundred of which he possessed bound in half calf. He had made other trips from time to time to foreign parts, and he aimed to keep in touch with old world interests by careful perusal of the local eclectic miscellany, "Littell's Living Age," composed of articles from European magazines. On his return from the Civil War

he had married, and, believing himself to be rich beyond the dreams of Boston avarice, he had settled down to the serious duties consequent upon bringing up his family, preserving his health, looking after his property and cultivating his mind. Incidentally he interested himself in charities and private theatricals and kept an eye on the Common—to preserve its integrity. He waged war on local pests like the English sparrows and the dust on the Back Bay through letters to the *Transcript*, and took a feverishly passive part in politics. Feverishly passive because his political convictions, though positive and even vindictive in their quality, rarely, if ever, operated beyond the ballot box in which he deposited his single ticket. Sometimes they stopped short of this, if it were inconvenient to vote, or if peculiarly unhappy nominations by both political parties had left him more than usually hopeless in regard to the future destinies of the nation. A secret ambition of his reserved nature was that he might be sent to Congress —one which he never confided even to his wife. The spontaneous proffer of the nomination by the people of the Congressional District would have pleased him greatly and would have seemed to him intelligent recognition of his latent capacity for public service. Yet he would have been the first to tell you that in this he cherished a vain hope and that, save in the case of genius and not always then, it was necessary to scramble for or purchase office under a Republican form of government.

Against the gray background of this somewhat cynical attitude of mind—the gray background, too, of his daily wardrobe, for Harrison Chippendale, like most of his friends, wore sober blacks and drabs and avoided novelties or extravagances in dress—stood the ideals of the man, none the less genuine because intuitive and not reduced

formally to a system; none the less living because the casual observer was not always able to identify them. What glorified his vision and reconciled him to the more or less deliberate inactivity of his middle life was the fact that he had served his country in the Civil War and that he bore the scars of an honorable wound. This experience had been his opportunity—the obvious answer to the question which the New England conscience of that day demanded of every true Bostonian—not "what shall I do to be saved?"—perish the thought!—but "what shall I do in order to do something?" There is no need for us to inquire what Harrison Chippendale would have done had fate not provided so enviable a background. As he walked the streets henceforth, dignified and irreproachable in his silk hat and lustreless but well-fitting clothes, the substance of the poet's thought was a part of his subconsciousness:

> "They come transfigured back
> Secure from change in their high-hearted ways,
> Beautiful evermore, and with the rays
> Of morn on their white shields of expectation."

Yet, on the other hand, the tranquillity of spirit thus engendered did not blind Harrison Chippendale to the need of fulfilling rigorously another obligation—no less a part of his creed as a true Bostonian—which was to gauge with discernment the things which he—and hence a gentleman—would not do; a sort of mellowed Calvinism which drew the line on gaudy pleasures and on equivocal compromises with honor. For such lapses he had only a cold frown or a stern shake of the head, as if he felt himself on guard to preserve hallowed traditions from violation. What a Bostonian will not do has ever been,

perhaps, his highest title to distinction. Yet he was an overseer of Harvard College and a director of the Boston Art Museum.

At this date Harrison Chippendale had been living on Commonwealth Avenue for nearly ten years. During this period his family of five had grown from children into young women and young men, and he suddenly found himself face to face with realization that the income of his principal was barely sufficient for their needs. Not only was the price of everything, from rent and servants to beef and eggs, advancing steadily, but new demands upon his purse were being constantly levied on the plea that they were absolutely indispensable to a family in the position which his occupied. With three daughters in society, Chauncey at Harvard, and Arthur at a private school, with a house on Commonwealth Avenue and a summer residence on the North shore, with saddle horses, club and pew assessments and annual donations to charity, he had begun to ask himself feverishly where he was coming out? Two of his girls might never marry—was not Aunt Georgiana ominously in point?—and if so, they must be provided for. The thought of leaving his daughters without the means to live as they had been accustomed haunted him in the watches of the night. For not only was his income insufficient, but his principal appeared to be in danger of shrinking. The shares of some of the cotton and woolen mills which he had been brought up to regard as gilt-edged investments were reported to be shrivelling up in the fire of competition and were passing their dividends. His own shares and also those belonging to his nephew, Henry Sumner, of whom he was the guardian and trustee. Here was a fresh source of anxiety, for his sister had two daughters as well as this only son, so that the affairs of two fami-

lies were virtually on his shoulders. In short, taking one thing with another, he felt worried, and being touched in his pocket he was touched in his pride, for though he regarded in the abstract money as dross and a mere means to an end, he had always until recently had more than he knew what to do with. Besides, it galled him to think that while he was growing poorer, his bachelor brother, Baxter, and his spinster sister had been waxing in riches. To be sure, this might redound eventually to the advantage of his children; but who could tell? His relations with his brother and sister were not unfriendly, yet no one of the three was apt to agree with either of the others on any subject. All the Chippendales were peculiar, and he held no assurance against a last will by either or both of them in favor of a hospital or of Harvard College. Moreover, the Chippendales were traditionally long-lived.

Baxter and Georgiana might well live to be ninety without providing just grounds for resentment to their heirs. In this connection, if it be said that Harrison Chippendale, under the stress of perplexities, was tempted to pry into the future further than true family delicacy permits, it will doubtless be agreed that the clouds upon his immediate horizon furnished some excuse for it.

In person he was tall, slim and erect, with a thin, pointed nose, and a slight goatee which he had worn since his first trip to Europe. His walk was elastic, but deliberate. Fashions might change, but he was always faithful to a silk hat on week days as well as Sundays and holidays—neatly brushed and annually exchanged for a fresh one persistently moulded on the same pattern, the distinguishing feature of which was a flatter brim than that usually worn. Regular as clock-work in his leisurely habits, he was a familiar and dignified figure on his walks to

and from State Street—he had no business, but he went down town for an hour about noon—by way of the Athenæum Library, where he stopped almost daily to browse among the new books.

CHAPTER VI

HENRY repaired to his Uncle Harrison's house the following day in time for luncheon. From the bay window his approach along Commonwealth Avenue was visible to the assembled family. They were all there—for Chauncey had come in from Cambridge to pass Sunday. It was he who spied his cousin half a block away.

"There's Henry Sumner," he said. "I wonder why he considers that little round felt hat of his harmonizes with a frock coat. I think he's coming in."

Mrs. Chippendale sighed. She was fond of her nephew and always glad to see him, but her sigh echoed the family judgment that, though good as gold, Henry was queer; that he liked queer people and was prone to entertain impossible opinions in regard to established conventions. He would be sure to inquire whether an invitation for her daughter Georgiana's coming out ball had been sent to a Miss Priscilla Avery and her step-sister, for he had written her a note requesting this favor, which she had put off answering.

"Come, girls, we must decide definitely one way or the other before he comes up-stairs," she said with a worried air.

Let not the radical or righteous fly hastily to the conclusion that this was so simple a request to grant as at first sight appears. It was their plan to have this ball, the expenses of which Aunt Georgiana Chippendale was to

defray in honor of her namesake, a fashionable and not too crowded affair. Neither of Mrs. Chippendale's other daughters had been a conspicuous social success. More than once she had been compelled to bring one or the other in a brand new Parisian dress home immediately after supper because the poor girl lacked a partner for the cotillon. Margaret, the eldest, was a silent girl in society, much interested in charities; Dorothy was rather plain and an awkward dancer. The girls seemed to accept philosophically their failure to arouse general admiration, but the consciousness was mortifying to their mother and had got a little on her nerves. They might never be married, even though it was said by the consoling that plain girls were liable to be married soonest. But Georgiana, the youngest, bid fair to become a social success. Everything pointed this way, and Mrs. Chippendale was anxious to avoid any false step. Two extra girls would tend to crowd the ball when taken in conjunction with the harrowing dimensions of her regular visiting list and requests which she had already received for numerous New York and Philadelphia girls. Moreover, her son Chauncey had intimated that there might be a shortage of men owing to the fact that the night which had been chosen was the eve of one of the Harvard examinations. Too many women for the supply of partners would be disastrous. Besides, what kind of girls were these whom Henry wished to include? His taste was not to be relied on. No wonder she felt worried; for she disliked to refuse him.

"I thought we had decided not to ask them," spoke up Georgiana. "It ought to be sufficient that they wouldn't know anybody."

"Except Henry," remarked Dorothy, to whom no one had ever been assiduously devoted and who occasionally

broke water with a sly sarcasm as a fish will now and then poke its head above the surface to the surprise of the onlookers.

"Whom she sees constantly," said their mother. "If it were anybody but Henry," she continued solicitously, "I could make him understand, but he—he will take it as a personal matter. He will impugn my motives; he will think we are snobbish. If it were not to be a small ball, of course I should be glad to send them invitations. I wish you would tell me again who they are," she added, addressing her eldest son.

"He will impugn your motives fast enough," responded Chauncey. "One of the girls—Henry's girl—is the daughter of a scientific man who's trying to invent something, and whose home was in Cambridge until his second wife married him. The other is her daughter—they are from the west—and they all live on Dartmouth Street beyond Huntington Avenue, where the present Mrs. Avery has Bohemian Saturday evenings at which Henry is a frequent attendant. I was told by a man who was there not long ago that both the girls are good looking, and he intimated that Henry was pretty far gone on Miss Priscilla Avery. Some fine morning we may wake up and find that they have been married at King's Chapel."

Chauncey had his father's pointed nose, but a round, placid and rather jocular face which expressed shrewdness and amiability. He was good looking without being effeminate. What was most noticeable in his personal appearance perhaps was its nicety, a sort of repressed but undisguisable elegance, a walking rebuke both to slovenliness and ostentation. Everything about him was neat, from the cut of his hair and the twist of his modest necktie to the bottoms of his trousers, which were turned up for no

manifest reason, yet the folds were smoothly ironed. Abroad his manner was not so distant as his father's, yet was restrained in tone, suggesting—which was indeed the case—that he deplored as vulgar all extravagances of speech or gesture. But at home and among his friends he had a lively way with him. He was of good height, but shorter and stockier than his father, taking more after his mother's family—the Floyds—who had been a less nervous race than the Chippendales. His mother, as Miss Margaret Floyd, had been a beauty in her day, and Chauncey and Georgiana among her children had inherited much of her good looks. Arthur, the other son, a youth of fourteen, promised to grow up tall and slim like her husband. The eldest child of all, Harrison, Jr., had died in early infancy, and Chauncey had been named after his maternal grandfather, old Deacon Chauncey Floyd, who, for nearly half a century, was "Treasurer of the Pilgrim Institution for Savings in the town of Boston."

The three girls smiled knowingly at this matrimonial forecast, but Mrs. Chippendale promptly shuddered.

"I wonder if your Aunt Eleanor has her eyes open to what is going on," she murmured.

Here her husband interposed with, "What is that you say, Chauncey? Married? Henry married? To whom, pray?"

"Miss Priscilla Avery, formerly of Cambridge, art student."

"Priscilla who? I suppose you are guying me, young man," he asserted with an indulgent smile at his son. He did not always understand the humor of his children, but was not averse to being practised on within the bounds of due filial respect.

"All I know, father, is that she's a pretty girl and that

Henry is said to be over head and ears in love with her. As to matrimony, seeing that Henry is Henry, I shouldn't be a bit surprised at anything."

"Your information—gossip shall I call it?—comes in the nick of time, for I sent for Henry to—to talk to him about something else. It costs money nowadays to maintain a wife."

"He's coming up-stairs," exclaimed Margaret in a stage whisper.

"Stand firm, mama; I don't want them," said Georgiana by way of caution. She was a vivacious, quick-witted girl, with a slim, graceful figure. Her small bird-like head was crowned with brown hair, and her eyes when in repose had the soft refinement of a doe. She possessed that same physical nicety which distinguished her brother Chauncey.

"Oh, yes, but I despair of being able to make him understand."

"I'm going to try and get him to confide in me," said Dorothy, with a little laugh. "It seems to be true romance and it's the first in the family."

"Don't you get mixed up in it, child," Mrs. Chippendale had only time to utter before her nephew appeared.

The greetings were affectionate and at the first pause the visitor said to his uncle, "I was sorry to miss you last night, Uncle Harrison."

"And where were you gallivanting, young man?"

The inquiry was purely casual, but the rest of the family pricked up their ears for the response.

There was an instant of embarrassed hesitation on Henry's part before he answered, "I was passing the evening with some friends."

This ambiguity caused Mr. Chippendale to remember.

It is a theory of mature years that what is called calf love can often be eradicated by felicitous banter. He proceeded to deal his nephew a humorous body blow without relaxing a muscle of his countenance.

"You neglected to tell us of what sex your friends were."

Henry blushed. He observed that his three girl cousins were smiling. Realizing that he was at bay, he said sturdily, "Why, Uncle Harrison, I was at Mrs. Avery's on Dartmouth Street, and my particular friend there is Mrs. Avery's step-daughter, Miss Priscilla Avery. I wish you all to know her," he continued looking from one to another. "I'm sure you would admire her immensely."

"Chauncey says she's very pretty," said Margaret, who was a conscientious girl and wished to ameliorate the situation for her cousin so far as was compatible with exact truth.

"That's only hearsay," said her brother. "I haven't seen her. But we're on to your curves, Henry. Don't think you've been telling us something startlingly novel. You may not credit your family with more than ordinary intelligence, but we're not purblind and stone deaf. The latest rumor is that her father has asked you your intentions."

"Oh, Chauncey!" murmured his mother, appalled yet convulsed by her eldest son's witticism. "Don't mind what he says, Henry, dear."

"I don't in the least," replied the victim with bright-eyed alacrity. "I don't mind adding——"

"Intentions? Nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Harrison. "At your age, Henry, a young man may without impropriety have a sweetheart—a best girl I believe you call it nowadays—in every street. Who is her father? Avery? Avery? I don't recall any Avery."

"Not Henry, I'm sure. He is of the constant kind," Dorothy interposed softly and obtained thereby a grateful glance from her cousin. It did not suit her to have the good faith of the first family romance called in question by any such fast and loose interpretation.

"I was only metaphorical about the 'intentions,'" Chauncey hastened to explain for his father's benefit, but this did not prevent Henry from answering the question.

"Gideon Avery. He's a Harvard graduate and—er—a scientific investigator. Recently he has married again and moved to Boston. But before that he lived a very retired life in Cambridge, where his energies were devoted to——"

"Avery? There was, I think, a man of that name in my regiment."

"Mr. Gideon Avery went through the war, sir."

"But he has never been to the army reunions. I have not seen him for twenty years. I should not know him to-day." This conclusion was evidently a serious reproach in the speaker's eyes.

"He has lived very much out of the world, Uncle Harrison, for he has been absorbed in experiments which thus far—. He knows General Horatio Langdon, the banker, who has interested himself in his inventions, I believe."

"Then it's the man, of course. Langdon was our colonel, you know, and subsequently our brigadier. I think I can place him now—a dreamy-eyed man with rather a stoop—a fine face, if I remember aright. I wonder why he has never turned up at any of the reunions. If so, I might be able to tell you more definitely about him."

"I imagine he has not been very well off."

"Ah! Very likely. An inventor?" The suggestion of straightened circumstances not only recalled to Mr. Chip-

pendale the real point which he desired to discuss with his nephew, but brought back the shadow of that from which he had supposed himself secure for life—the possibility of personal financial worry. His sister had fortunately taken upon her shoulders the burden of Georgiana's coming out ball, but if it were not one thing in the way of unexpected demands upon him, it seemed to be another. "I'm glad you've come, Henry. There are several matters I wish to talk over with you after luncheon," he exclaimed by way of postponement. "Is not luncheon on the table, my dear?" he inquired of his wife.

"It ought to be," said Mrs. Chippendale, glancing at the clock. While listening to the dialogue she had been trying to frame a refusal which would not wound her nephew's sensibilities. Now she heard him declare with the air of one who, having found that his secret is no secret, sees fit not merely to make a clean breast of it, but to glory in his infatuation——

"As the subject has come up—and you seem to have heard it spoken of—I don't mind saying that I am in love with Priscilla Avery. She's my ideal of all a woman ought to be, and if I don't marry her, it won't be because I don't ask her."

Henry spoke without a quaver. There was just a touch of defiance in his tone, due, perhaps, to foreknowledge of the mirth which his fervent avowal would call forth from his cousin Chauncey. To proclaim his passion on the house-tops was the last thing which his diffident soul would have indulged in but for the condescension of his family, which had goaded him to a point where to be silent would have appeared to him craven. Chauncey was on the broad grin and he heard the girls, though manifestly thrilled by such dramatic impetuosity, each gasp with amusement

in her own way, while he noticed that his aunt was regarding him with an embarrassment which suggested that she had doubts if he were perfectly sane. It was to her that he addressed the further remark——

"You will remember, Aunt Margaret, that it was for Miss Avery and her step-sister, Miss Burroughs, that I wrote you the other day for invitations for Georgiana's ball."

The appearance of the servant to announce luncheon was utilized as a convenient escape from immediate comment on his ardent but dazing confession by every one of the family except Mr. Chippendale. He clapped his nephew on the shoulder and said—casting a significant glance in the direction of his eldest son—"I do not object to hear a young man talk like that. It may be old-fashioned, but it does credit to your imagination, Henry. I was like that at your age. I remember feeling sure that I was definitely and overwhelmingly in love; but—but the young lady who subsequently did me the honor to become my wife was, at that juncture, in her cradle, which I venture to predict is the present status of the future Mrs. Henry Sumner. Come, my dear boy, luncheon is ready."

Too much stirred by the boldness of his own performance to take close note of his uncle's speech, Henry was moving mechanically toward the dining-room when he became conscious that his aunt had put her hand through his arm to detain him, and he heard her exclaim: "Henry and I will follow you directly. There is something which I wish to say to him."

Gentle and even deprecatory as she appeared in everyday life, Mrs. Chippendale, where her offspring were concerned, could be uncompromising as a lioness. Henry's declaration of his attachment for Miss Avery had made an

immediate decision in the other matter imperative, and between the two claims she had promptly decided in favor of her daughter. Her tone was highly conciliatory, but her jaws were obstinately set. "As to those invitations, Henry; I am so sorry," she began. "Perhaps you don't know that ours is to be an unusually small ball. Georgiana has been obliged to leave out a number of girls of her own acquaintance, and—" She felt him start and look at her. She was prepared to be condemned by him, and she did not wince, but after her pause set forth kindly and concisely the excellent reasons which she had for her refusal, dwelling on the point that the girls would not know anybody except him. "Of course," she said in conclusion, "if you were engaged to her—I take for granted, Henry, dear, that you are not engaged to her?"

"I have not that honor."

"In that case she would be virtually one of the family. But as it is—I do hope, Henry, that I make our position clear to you and that I don't seem to you unkind."

"Perfectly clear that you don't want her, Aunt Margaret."

"We do want her; we haven't room for her—for them. Remember there are two. Two extra girls at a small party are an incumbrance, and there—there's where you ought to trust, if I may say so, my greater social experience."

"They were the only friends of mine I asked you to include. I can't help feeling—" He stopped, but his voice proclaimed his suspicion. "Then I shall have to tell them——"

"You don't mean to say that you have already asked them?" broke in Mrs. Chippendale with a gasp of dismay, for to her socially trained mind the supposition revealed an embarrassing predicament.

"I told Miss Avery the other day that I should ask you

for an invitation and I took for granted that it would include her step-sister. I admit that she didn't seem elated at the prospect, and I don't suppose she'll care much—but I've got to tell her something. She'll expect me to refer to it again." It was clear that this point was already on his conscience. It was clear, too, to his aunt that he thought she had excluded them solely because they were not fashionable enough.

Mrs. Chippendale was also exercised by the plight in which he had placed her. "It's very awkward," she exclaimed, her temper rising fast. "You'll have to tell her, Henry, that the list was closed—that you spoke to me too late. I can't run the risk of spoiling Georgiana's ball by inviting them merely because you have placed me in a false position."

Having spoken thus to the point and clinched the situation, the lioness looked a little as if she were going to weep. "Try to understand, Henry," she said. "You seem to see only your side. But I have a side—Georgiana's side. I can't bear to have you think that we are unkind." She put her hands on his shoulders and looked up into his face which was doggedly severe.

"I hadn't strictly the right to say anything about an invitation until I had spoken to you," he felt impelled to state. "Yet I did suppose——"

The speech was dismal and left no room to doubt that he was still perplexed and sore. But Mrs. Chippendale knew that the worst was over and she was rejoicing that she had not been persuaded against her will. She hurried her nephew along toward the dining-room saying soothingly, with the desire of smoothing the matter out for him:

"I wouldn't refer to it to her if I were you. She will think you have forgotten to ask."

He stopped short. "She'll know I would never have forgotten," he exclaimed impetuously. "Besides, it's my duty to tell her."

"Duty?" echoed his aunt. Then after a moment, she added, "There is such a thing as being over-conscientious in dealing with small social matters. For instance, a lady may be lawfully in when her servant says she's out." This was a primary truth in a social education, but Mrs. Chippendale felt that she had to deal with a social ignoramus.

"Therefore there's no danger of my explaining to Miss Avery and Miss Burroughs the real reason why they were not invited."

This was so much less direct than Henry's usual style—almost enigmatic, in fact—that Mrs. Chippendale, in trying to conjecture what he did mean held her peace until they reached the dining-room. There, during their cousin's absence, the youthful members of the family had exploded. Whatever else the girls thought of Henry's performance, they agreed to Chauncey's assertion that it was a tremendous joke. They kept smiling afresh to the edification of their brother Arthur, who was at the age when boys are apt to regard all girls as silly things. Chauncey evidently considered that he had been provided with the means wherewith to make his cousin's life miserable. He chuckled with delight; but the renewal of these sounds, after he had ventured to repeat dramatically under his breath, "She's my ideal of all a woman ought to be," evoked a frown from his father who declared the affair to be sheer nonsense and Henry's utterance mere impulsiveness. "I'll nip in the bud any present ideas which he has of marriage as soon as I have the opportunity to talk to him alone," he stated majestically. His daughters, whose hearing was a little more acute, put a finger to their lips for

their cousin was at hand. Margaret, who had a conscientious aptitude for bringing up topics for conversation at family meals, hastened to introduce the morning sermon. But Chauncey was in too radiant a mood to let his victim off so easily. When the dessert was being served and the dangerous subject appeared to be forgotten, he suddenly lifted his glass of claret and cried:

"Well, here's to Mrs. Henry Sumner, whoever she prove to be."

His sisters betrayed again their inward amusement, while his mother murmured:

"Chauncey, you are irrepressible!"

"That's a harmless sentiment, surely," said Mr. Chippendale blandly. "'Whoever she prove to be.'"

Henry, whose spirit had crept back into its shell, and who was blushing inwardly as the result of scrutinizing in cold blood his recent elocution, now turned externally red again. He realized that he had supplied the formidable Chauncey with an inexhaustible store of ammunition. He was proud of every sentiment which he had uttered; he had no desire to recant or to apologize for his fervor; but he did not know how to get started again. The words for which he sought did not cleave to the roof of his mouth, for they did not come at all. Or came so scantily that they sounded futile. He blushed rather than spoke inarticulate thanks for the toast and was conscious of looking, as he reflected, like a disconcerted owl. He was glad to find himself presently alone with his uncle in the library.

The last special interview between uncle and nephew—behind closed doors and out of earshot of the family—had taken place at the end of Henry's sophomore year when Mr. Chippendale had felt constrained to warn his sister's son against the dangers of developing into what he

termed an "off horse." At that time he took occasion to point out that his nephew's course had scarcely been normal, indeed had been almost antagonistic to that pursued by most college men. He had studied hard, which was well enough, highly creditable indeed in the abstract, though Mr. Chippendale was secretly of the opinion that the study of human nature, as he termed it, closely followed by his son Chauncey, was more valuable. But his chief fault was that he never seemed content to let well enough alone, and on one plea or another, was continually objecting to the established order of things. As a result—so Mr. Chippendale had been informed—he was far from popular and had been elected even into the large college societies only by the skin of his teeth. Chauncey had reported that the boy had even given up hunting and fishing on the ground that he objected to taking life.

Mr. Chippendale continuing had remarked, "You know, my dear Henry, there is no one more in sympathy with true idealism than we Chippendales. But a state of mind which breeds factious opposition is liable to become chronic —and in order to be effective in this world one must overlook much, for one cannot tilt at everything. Your father——"

The sudden change in his nephew's expression from respectful and grateful mildness to critical attention at this point had checked the speaker. What he had in mind was to intimate with delicacy that the late Colonel Henry Sumner had sought danger literally in the cannon's mouth, and might have been living at the moment had he not rushed to destruction when discretion would have been the better part of valor—better especially in the case of one with a wife and three infants. Mr. Chippendale had been almost an eye-witness of the occurrence, and was fond of ponder-

ing the ethics of the situation, in chapter and verse. His brother-in-law had died like a hero—but there were other heroes who had lived. The desire to express his meaning without giving offence—for he was well aware that the son was sensitive where his father's memory was concerned—caused him to pause a moment before he said:

"Your father was the bravest of men, but if he were alive, I am sure he would counsel you to be less censorious—er—in regard to trifles, and to reserve your ammunition for the big abuses of life. You look thin, my dear boy. You ought to eat more, and you will not misunderstand me when I say that an occasional night of—er—relaxation does no young man any harm. One may be a man of ideals without ceasing entirely to be a man of the world. There is a motto which it will do you no harm to bear in mind—'In medio tutissimus ibis.'"

Henry had shaken his head and smiled. "If you only knew how often I bite my tongue, Uncle Harrison. But at the time the trifles are apt to seem large as elephants. It's my nature to be thin—my father was, you know—and as to the rest of it, I never could be popular like Chauncey. He's the most popular man in college."

Mr. Chippendale accepted this tribute to his son with the serenity of one conscious of the fact. "I expect to see Chauncey make his mark in life. I understand that he declaims well." He was thinking of the public life from which he felt himself debarred. In his mind's eye, he beheld his boy as a member of Congress, a United States Senator, and finally a Minister at the Court of St. James. "That reminds me," he added, "Have you made up your mind yet, Henry, what you wish to do?"

"Not wholly. Professor Paton said to me the other day something about devoting my life to higher scholarship,

and I gathered that if I do well until I graduate, they may invite me to remain as an instructor."

"I thought very likely that you would go in for something bookish." Mr. Chippendale's comment was complacent, for the factory stocks had not yet passed their dividends, and he regarded a professorship at Harvard as a berth well adapted to the not entirely practical abilities of his nephew. It was a dignified post and would be an excellent supplement in family honor to the political laurels in reserve for his own son.

This conversation between them had taken place two years earlier. In the interval the situation had so far changed that Mr. Chippendale felt his nephew was entitled to know, first that the family income was no longer what it had been, and secondly that nearly everything cost more than it used to. How these data would affect Henry's choice of a means of livelihood was a matter of conjecture —Mr. Chippendale himself had been doubtful what to advise. He had been doubtful, but this possibility of a hasty, impecunious marriage—absurd as it was on the face of it—was the final factor in leading him to the conclusion that, all things considered, his nephew had better go to work, and that it was incumbent on himself to tell him so.

CHAPTER VII

SAVE for a certain eagerness to go to work forthwith, as though retrenchment implied more than a slight temporary curtailment of his mother's income, Henry proved in his uncle's eyes, and rather to Mr. Chippendale's surprise, a most amenable and passive auditor. Instead of being obliged to lead tactfully up to the point of advising

that he renounce the teaching of Greek, Mr. Chippendale found himself listening to the statement that Henry had decided to do so. This was welcome, though it irritated him that his nephew, while inviting him to suggest the best kind of opening down-town, should display quite such a "Horatius-at-the-bridge" manner.

> "Lo! I will stand at thy right hand
> And keep the bridge with thee."

The figure of speech and quotation had emanated from Chauncey, of course—a style of humor which was very different from his own. But Mr. Chippendale, in observing his nephew's tense demeanor, was reminded of this facetious description of it previously indulged in by his jocose son. Moreover, he felt it wise to caution Henry on the spot that progress in any vocation must necessarily be slow, and that State Street was not to be carried like a fortress at the point of the bayonet. "It will be several years, in all probability," he added, "before you are earning your salt. And of course you must complete your college course like a gentleman."

Henry looked a little crestfallen at this prediction, but he remained becomingly meek. It was only when his uncle—in order, doubtless, to emphasize the fact that there was nothing in the situation which demanded unseemly haste—suggested that very likely his mother would desire him to spend a year abroad before putting his nose to the grindstone, that he demurred. But Mr. Chippendale did not think it necessary to dwell on this point. He was agreeably surprised to find that they were in accord on the main proposition, and gratified that Henry should show himself so alive to his responsibilities as a son and so rational in his point of view. The greater portion of their interview was

consumed in an endeavor to satisfy Henry's newly awakened curiosity in regard to the family investments, concerning which he was glad to furnish the fullest particulars. When his nephew had departed, Mr. Chippendale remembered that the subject of matrimony had not been broached except in a general admonition by him to the effect that a young man with his way to make could not think of such a thing for a long time to come—a remark which had failed to elicit contradiction. He concluded that—just as every cloud has its silver lining—the reduction of the dividend in the Warrior Mills had been the means of saving one of the family from an unwise match.

Mr. Chippendale was correct in his surmise—that is, so far as his nephew's purpose was concerned. Henry left the house with two thoughts in mind. He must inform his lady-love that he had been unable to obtain an invitation for her to his cousin's coming-out ball, and he would explain that he was no longer in a position to ask her to become his wife. Obligatory as the first seemed to him, the second was, of course, the soul-absorbing necessity. When he had requested an interview the night before, he had supposed himself able to marry. Now it was obvious, as his uncle had pointed out, that several years might elapse before his income was sufficient to enable him to do so. In the meanwhile—assuming that she reciprocated his love—would Priscilla be willing to wait for him? This was the point which he was eager to ascertain. He was prepared to wait for her, if necessary, to the end of time, a state of mind which he intended to make clear to her in the course of the afternoon.

He was shown into the drawing-room on Dartmouth Street, and almost immediately Priscilla came down. Evidently they were to be left to themselves, which seemed to

Henry a straw in his favor, though the words of the appointment did not necessarily presage an offer of marriage. Yet he had emphasized gently the word "particular"—"something particular which I wish to say to you."

Priscilla, as she sat and looked at him, was wondering why she had consented to the interview. To have answered that she would not be at home would have been so easy. Was she not self-convicted again of a sort of inconsistency in her attitude toward this Beacon Street admirer? "Again," because in spite of having systematically spoken ill of him to her family and abused him to herself, she had suffered him to continue his attentions and to draw her into lengthy arguments. She had no difficulty in treating Professor Paton composedly. Why should she not be equally calm in the presence of his disciple in Greek—unless it were, to be sure, that he provoked her more? As to sanctioning the present interview, there was this to be said—he was plainly bent on making sooner or later a definite proposal and would never be satisfied with anything short of a very unequivocal "no." Besides, there would be a certain satisfaction in throwing over so high and mighty a suitor. It would surprise him infinitely; he would never be able to understand how it could happen.

Yet, as she thus reassured herself, Priscilla was conscious of excitement, of a certain curiosity, let it be called, which she promptly ascribed to the credit of a first proposal. The preliminaries of dialogue were over. Why did he not begin? It was obvious enough from his embarrassed manner that the particular thing which he had to say was of such moment that he had become tongue-tied. Yet he was looking at her with an intensity which brought back the night when he had been Hafiz—that delusive hour of romance.

"When I spoke to you last evening, Miss Avery," he began, "I believed that I was coming here this afternoon to ask you to be my wife."

So succinct were his highly charged words that he produced the effect of having endeavored to compress into compact form a statement which should be exhaustive. To be sure, from his own self-conscious point of view it was only preliminary; he had no suspicion even that he had put the cart squarely ahead of the horse in the train of amatory logic. But to Priscilla his speech seemed amazingly definite—in a sense, mortifying, too, though egregiously mirth-provoking. So he was not going to offer himself, after all. Did his pause and appealing stare mean that he was waiting for an answer? She felt the blush of mortification rising to her temples, but it had a close competitor in her desire to laugh.

"You mean that you have changed your mind?"

The blunt suggestion was appalling; a lightning-flash in an instant illumined the dark passages in poor Henry's labyrinth, so that his dire clumsiness dawned on him.

"Oh, no—oh, no!" he protested in confusion. "You do not understand. I—I meant—" Then, as he shrank back from the bog of explanation, he exclaimed with piteous earnestness, "Let me go on, Miss Avery."

"Please *do*," urged Priscilla, whose eyes were sparkling with amusement. She was mistress of herself now, and confident that this pseudo offer of marriage was to prove far more edifying than the genuine article could possibly have been. Yet she threw back her head a little impatiently, as a lily sways on its graceful stem.

Henry's lips were dry. "What I should have said," he resumed relentlessly, "is that you are my ideal of all a

woman should be" (a repetition of what he had already uttered an hour before, but was it not comprehensive?) "and that I love you devotedly. Whatever happens, nothing can change this."

The genuineness of his feeling was unmistakable; there was a breathless ardor in the last sentence which, in spite of the humor of the situation, was not lost on Priscilla. If she did not thrill, at least she restrained her caustic impulse to interrupt.

"I was going to tell you this to-day—I *am* telling it to you and am ready to continue for ever and ever. But—but when I went home last night after leaving you, I found that my uncle—my uncle, Harrison Chippendale, who is the trustee under my father's will—had been there to say that what I had believed to be the case is no longer so. I have been brought up to suppose—it seems I took too much for granted—that so far as money in moderation was concerned, I was independent—that I was free to marry whenever I chose. But it appears that recently the family investments have not done well—I blame myself now for not understanding better about my affairs—and there is only enough income for my mother and sisters. So"—he lingered a moment on the word as if he desired to make sure this time of putting the pitiful situation exactly before her. "So it has become imperative that I abandon my plan of becoming an instructor at Harvard and earn my own living down-town."

Sacrificed to his sisters again! Was there ever such a man? Priscilla's amazed attention pounced on this edifying allusion as a cat upon a mouse.

"Why did you feel that you must tell me this?" she asked demurely.

How disconcerting to a lover who believed that he had

been manfully explicit! But Henry was not given time to explain.

"You were afraid I should be disappointed if you did not clear the matter up. That was very considerate of you. When I think of how near I came to impoverishing your mother and sisters, I cannot be too thankful that you have been so frank."

He looked at her doubtfully. The satire, if genuine, was so excruciating that, shrinking from the truth, he sought to extract some comfort from her final remark.

Priscilla, perceiving his plight, laughed gleefully. "You are prudence itself, Mr. Hafiz Sumner!"

"Oh!" he gasped in his dismay. "You are offended."

"Only disappointed. You have clearly demonstrated to me with New England conscientiousness that no other course was possible. You had to throw me over."

Though painfully conscious of her mockery, Henry snatched at the precious possibility which her words, disdainful as they were, disclosed.

"Do you mean—?" he began, with ecstasy in his eyes.

"If I did, it is too late," she interrupted, in her delight that he had yielded to the lure and thus assured her only possible vengeance.

"Priscilla, forgive me," he cried. "I have expressed myself clumsily, but——"

"How dare you call me by my Christian name?" Willing as she was to fool him to the top of his bent, this was more than she could put up with. What a strange compound he was of shyness and audacity!

The rebuke was disconcerting. Henry was visibly abashed. Yet he persisted in his infatuation that on account of wounded pride she was concealing her real feelings. For whether this were so or not, the hope that she would

care for him in the end was one he intended to cherish indefinitely. He gnawed his lip in his distress, for her derisive smile seared his soul like an iron. At the same time it aroused his spirit of contradiction. He had apologized for his lack of tact; he was ready to be condemned on the score of awkwardness, but he took issue with his scornful tormentor concerning the merits of the case. She resented his throwing her over, as she called it, on account of his mother and sisters. What other course was open but to tell her the exact truth—that he was unable to support a wife? Therefore, though his agitation disclosed that he was doing penance for calling her Priscilla without leave, he said as soon as he found his tongue:

"Seeing that I loved you, Miss Avery, and was determined that you should know the fact, I wish you would tell me what else I could have done." He paused for a moment to let the words sink in, then added a little plaintively, "Would you have married me just as I am, if I had asked you?"

His entire mental attitude from the first word to this belated perception of his fault—now soberly tendered her like a wish-bone on a platter for her to seize and pull apart with him in argument—tallied so thoroughly with Priscilla's preconceptions regarding him that she could have cried with joy. Was she not now completely justified in her judgment that he was exactly the sort of man she would never marry? In response to his query her first impulse was to answer "Certainly not"; but to do so would spoil the fun. It was incumbent on her to punish him effectively by leaving the question open, and yet at the same time rebuke that strain of obstinacy—that pride of opinion which had cropped up in him as usual. As she watched him sitting there, abashed yet earnest, solicitous

yet expectant, with his lips closed and his eyes gleaming, she rejoiced in the opportunity he had given her to enlighten him as to what he really was—the conventional, critical, cold type of Boston man which she abhorred.

Accordingly, she bent on him deliberately her fine, soulful eyes. Was not a little coquetry permissible toward such a lover? As salve to her conscience, if any were necessary, there was this—that but for his being the antipodes of everything she admired in man, she might have learned to like him.

"That is something which you will never know," she declared.

He drew a deep breath. The ambiguity was intoxicating, and it occurred to him that here was the opportunity when a man of a different temper—both his cousin Chauncey and the Avery's new boarder arose before him as examples—would have swept away her scruples by taking her in his arms. But in the same breath he was subconsciously aware that he was restrained from doing so by the dread that she might not like it. Aware both that he did not dare and that his limpness was a heritage from a long line of strait-laced, self-scrutinizing, unemotional ancestors—thus he stigmatized his family tree in the bitterness of the moment. Their influence seemed to him, like that of so many old men of the sea, to dampen his spirit until it mildewed, so that he remained capable only of exclaiming dramatically:

"Then I shall infer that——"

But Priscilla cut him short. "Do not interrupt me. You have requested me to inform you what else you could have done, and I was about to do so. Besides, whatever your inference, everything now is settled both for the present and the future." No one should be able to accuse her

of being infirm of purpose; she could ply the dagger relentlessly at the proper moment.

Henry was thankful now that he had restrained himself, and he winced a little before this disdainful ultimatum, but he answered firmly: "Yes, I wish you to tell me."

It was Priscilla's turn to draw a deep breath before she spoke. This was the sweetest moment of her life. Such an opportunity was one she had never dreamed of. Fate had delivered him into her hands and thereby sanctified her prejudices.

"You might have left it to me. Given me the chance."

"The chance?"

"The chance of deciding. But you took it into your own hands. You decided the question for both of us like a true, cautious Bostonian. You had counted the cost. We could not afford it; we might be poverty-stricken all our lives; I might be obliged to do the housework and you to clean out the furnace. And so"—she, too, in her turn, lingered on the word to emphasize her scorn—"and so before you introduced me to the wingless starveling which you call your love, you solemnly sacrificed him on the altar of consummate prudence."

Henry had become crimson; but he protested:

"On the contrary, I came here to pour out my soul to you and to implore you to wait."

She made a gesture of impatience. "Wait after you had told me that you could not afford to marry me? Listen. Is this what Hafiz would have done? What any one would have done who really loved a woman as she demands to be loved? Let me tell you"—she threw back her head imperiously, throbbing with her theme. "The man for whom I would wait would come to me breathing his devotion as a flame, inspired to fall upon his bended knees,

eager, if any one but I demurred, to clamber to my lattice window at dead of night and claim me as his bride without a penny. Ready in order to win me to risk all, forsake all —mother and sisters—even though starvation, and obscurity—yes, and social ostracism stared him in the face. That is love. You offered me instead a pitiful apology."

"It was out of consideration for you. It never occurred to me—" he stammered.

It was plain from his expression that he was mortified—that her words had lacerated him; but no less so that he still insisted on defending himself.

"That's just the point—it never occurred to you," she cried with a triumphant inflection. "It never occurred to you that a man should feel like this; it never occurred to you that a woman might be ready—" She left the rest to his imagination, leaning forward from her chair in her enjoyment at plunging to the hilt the dagger of her disdain.

"I took for granted that you——"

"No man should take anything for granted with a woman where love is concerned."

"Then you mean that if——"

"I mean that because you are you it was impossible from the first." She spoke with meditated precision. This was to be the finishing stroke.

A fresh wave of color rose to Henry's gaunt cheeks. Hope for the moment had departed, but with it self-consciousness. He sat confronting the horizon of a lonely manhood. So much for the past and for the future. As for the present, tingling as he was, he was unable to forget that a principle was involved.

"I was ready to fall on my bended knees. I am still," he declared with simple dignity.

"That would be absurd," she retorted, and she did

not resist the temptation to add, "You would not do it well."

Henry could not deny this. He was only too conscious of its truth, for it was one of the things which, in previous watches of the night and on his way to her house, he had wondered if he ought to do—had asked himself anxiously if men did nowadays.

"I agree," he replied, smiling wanly, for his sense of humor was stirred.

Priscilla smiled back. She was beginning to be a little sorry for him. If he were sufficiently crushed and really contrite, she could afford to apply some ointment to his wounds.

"And you agree with the rest? You are convinced?"

His smile did not vanish, but it altered to that of the martyr ready to die for his cause. "I am convinced that I was clumsy—lukewarm in expression, unimaginative, what you please—but I still think that it would not have been honest; that it was right to tell you my—er—real circumstances before I spoke."

Priscilla listened spiritually aghast. How obstinate he was! His quiet determination was positively nettling in its quality. It came over her that her irony had spent itself in vain, and that in spite of her lashing—in spite of the enlightenment he had received—he was still the same man as before; an irritating conclusion to her ambitious spirit. Yet, though he spoke resolutely, it was with a wistful courtliness which suggested to her that he hoped she would not regard him merely as pig-headed. So artless, so genuine was his concern that even in her resentment it passed through her mind that in other circumstances he might almost have appeared charming.

But this only instigated her the more to compress into

a dignified phrase one final retort which should be also a sentence of dismissal, for, as he finished, she had heard the voices in the hall of Lora and Mr. Blaisdell returning from a long walk. She wished to have done with this exasperating lover and to begin life afresh.

"You are an impossible man, Mr. Sumner. You are hopeless."

She meant that her words should have just that metallic ring, just that touch of airiness which they expressed. She rose as she uttered them.

But once more she perceived that, like Antæus when he touched mother earth, her visitor gained fresh force from opposition. Was he, too, becoming a little airy? At least he was smiling again. Priscilla did not realize that this was because he was about to play upon her phrase.

"I am not hopeless, at least, of making you marry me some day."

Such a presumptuous challenge was amusing, at any rate. It was too absurd to require an answer; but fidelity like this in the face of such severe, though condign, punishment merited some appreciation.

" Good-by," she said, putting out her hand like Majesty seeking to be gracious, and she held his firmly, if only to show that the blood in her veins ran red.

Then, to her surprise, and far more to his—what will not Boston men do when goaded?—he bent forward and imprinted a respectful but ardent kiss on her wrist.

The joy that he had ventured this, the surprise that it had really happened, and the agitating wonder whether it were an atrocious liberty which would never be forgiven combined to confuse his senses, so that he backed out of the room completely in the dark as to how she had taken it. At least she had not reproached him audibly, screamed or

fainted. But Miss Avery was not of the fainting kind, and, though she might have screamed, would she not presumably at the same moment have boxed his ears? So he reflected when, having found himself on the sidewalk, he turned sharply to the right in order that he might collect his faculties and revise his scheme of life by means of a walk toward the South end before returning home. One of the first things which he remembered as he proceeded on his way was that he had neglected to inform Priscilla of his inability to obtain an invitation for her to his cousin's ball. But considering all the circumstances this now seemed to him unimportant. He was dismissed and he had been proved ridiculous; but was he not right? Besides, he had demonstrated at the last moment that she had misjudged the depth of his feelings. Was he really cold and captious? Incapable of the transport which should animate a lover? Her words had sunk deep, yet in spite of his abasement, he reserved to himself the right of private judgment as well as that of dogged hope as he settled into his long, nervous stride.

CHAPTER VIII

As General Langdon had informed Blaisdell, the firm of Delano & Hurd was short-handed. His partner's sudden death had thrown Delano too exclusively on his own resources. It had occurred at the end of a period of stagnation just as the market had begun to rise rapidly and the public was coming in. Hurd had been the office man; who, besides overseeing the books, interviewed the customers and advised them what to buy. Delano was not

ready to take another partner. Bookkeepers were plentiful as berries on a bush; what he needed was a wide-awake, energetic, sociable assistant in the outer office who would be on hand to inspire confidence and answer questions when he himself was in the "board." It was not easy to find just the right man. He had taken Blaisdell on approval, not because he expected him to satisfy the requirements, but because he had no one else in view and General Langdon had stated that he fancied the young man's looks. He needed some one immediately, for he was doing a rushing business.

It was one opportunity in a thousand. Delano, who was not quite forty—a nervous, excitable man with a thin, pale face and eyes keen as a ferret's, but a wag in his way, and popular—had served his apprenticeship on State Street and set up for himself on the strength of a small capital but a considerable fund of experience. Blaisdell threw himself into the breach with an enthusiasm which never flagged. What he did not know was appalling, but he glossed over his ignorance when customers were in the office by means of his affability, and applied himself assiduously to mastering the lingo of the street and familiarizing himself with the speculative properties most prominently in the public eye. His employer was agreeably disappointed from the first. Within a very short time, Delano discovered that he had unearthed a treasure; at the end of three months he realized that his assistant was an extremely able man; by the close of the first year he suspected that others were reaching the same conclusion; whereupon, apprehensive of losing him, he offered Blaisdell a small share in the business conditional on his binding himself to remain for three years.

The broker felt no doubts as to the wisdom of his action.

Most young men might require a five years' training downtown before they were fit for responsibility, but here was an exception; and the reasons were apparent. Not merely did this novice revel in hard work, but he had such a pleasant and convincing way with him that the customers already hung on his words. Also he showed unmistakable signs of being a "mouser"—the possessor of the happy faculty of finding out things in advance of others, an eminently valuable qualification for a business consecrated to buying at the bottom and selling at the top. Most important of all, Blaisdell never seemed to lose his head, but was endowed with what he—Delano—glibly referred to as reserve force. "I watched him during the last flurry," he would say, "and he didn't turn a hair, though it looked for fifteen minutes as if the market were going to ballyhack. That's not my temperament. I wouldn't dare to bet that in a real panic I shouldn't appear like a galvanized jumping-jack. Mark my words, the fellow has lots of reserve force."

How swiftly a good reputation often spreads by word of mouth! All of a sudden it became current on every one's lips in banking circles that Delano's new partner was a wonder—some one distinctly out of the common in point of ability and discernment. The rumor presently reached the ears of General Horatio Langdon, who experienced a passing regret that he had let so promising a youth slip through his fingers. It was repeated from one to another that the advice to buy stocks on the break—when to the timid it appeared as if the height of the bull movement had been reached—had emanated from him, and also that it was he who had suggested the purchase of a certain low-priced manufacturing stock just before it rose twenty points in as many days. Who was he? Where did he

come from? Who were his forebears? The current answer to these interrogatories was that he came of good Maine stock, was a graduate of a fresh-water college and was at present boarding at the house of a Cambridge professor on Dartmouth Street. This proved at least that he was no confidence man in disguise; therefore he was permitted to take his place on State Street as a promising financial stripling, one who had won his spurs so quickly as almost to excite suspicion concerning his staying powers, but whose future would bear watching. Already, however, several of the younger customers of the office had become disposed to aid him socially. Would he not like to join the Suburban Club where he could play golf and tennis and enjoy an open-air holiday now and then? Two of them insisted on proposing him for membership. Some one else took him to a political caucus, where, at the right moment, he made a few sensible remarks. Everybody present was curious to know who he was, and later in the evening he was named as an alternate delegate to the convention for the choice of a member of the Governor's Council.

Blaisdell accepted this progress mainly as a matter of course. He was too busy to analyze how much it was due to merit, how much to fortune, and such speculation would have seemed to him futile. Striving from day to day with all his might to make the most of his opportunity, he was elated but not surprised by the offer of partnership. He had proved efficient and had raised himself by one bound from the lowest round of the ladder to a point from which he could survey the heads of the crowd. But was not this just such a result as he had intended? It did not occur to him to decline Delano's proposition, but he was agreeably conscious that it had been broached more or less in self-

defence. He had made himself indispensable and was reaping the legitimate fruit of his assiduity.

At the same time he was making progress of another kind, which may be defined as deciding which of Mrs. Avery's daughters he preferred. Yet he had no real doubts on the subject. On the contrary, the presence of Priscilla served constantly as an argument in support of his first impression—a fine creature, but not exactly his sort. She might be clever, was possibly deeper than her step-sister, but she was not cosey enough for a wife. She struck him as an exotic in womanhood—some splendid, but half-ripe fruit. Whereas Lora, with her trig plumpness and gay, practical ways, hung like a golden pippin ripe for the touch of a modern Hercules.

This did not signify that he was planning anything desperate. But by the end of twelve months he had reached the stage not merely of being certain that he intended to marry Lora, but of asking himself how soon he could hope to do so. Therefore Delano's offer was doubly welcome; it gratified his ambition and opened the door to wedlock. He considered himself practically engaged to her already; he had said enough to let her divine his ulterior purpose without committing himself in precise terms; and the manner in which she continued to accept his devotion satisfied him that she understood. It had seemed to him absurd to be tied to a girl by the string of a long engagement. Suppose either of them wearied of the ordeal or fell in love with some one else, what an awkward situation! On the other hand, now that he was able to support a wife, he was eager to be married at once. On the same afternoon when she agreed to become his wife, he consulted Lora as to the feasibility of concealing the matter for a week and then of going out to be married some fine morning unknown to

any one. That would avoid all fuss and feathers—so he dubbed the nuptial preliminaries.

Lora uttered a little outcry of dismay. To be married without a wedding dress and a wedding cake, without time to prepare a trousseau and take some lessons in domestic economy—such a summary programme was not to be thought of for a moment. But she agreed with him as to the desirability of a short engagement, and if he were in a hurry, she was ready to be married in the spring. It being now December, Blaisdell promptly bargained for March. Lora fixed upon May, which, she assured him, was a whole month sooner than he had any right to expect. Were not most brides married in June? Finally they compromised on April. Blaisdell would have had her appoint the date, especially after she had admitted that it might be any day except Friday; but there Lora was obdurate.

"I must leave myself at least that loophole of escape," she lisped gleefully. "You know I might change my mind." Then, as if she feared that even this transparent feint might convey the impression that she was in earnest, she buried her head on his shoulder.

"I'm the happiest girl on earth because you love me," she murmured.

Blaisdell hugged her closer with his big arm and kissed her ardently. They were seated on the divan, and were all alone in the house, for Priscilla had gone to the theatre with Mr. and Mrs. Avery. He had taken advantage of the first favorable opportunity since the formation of his partnership.

"It was love at first sight for me—at first sight and forever," he answered. "At the beginning I guess I tried to resist, but your blue eyes and golden hair and dear little dimples were too much for me, sweetheart."

She lifted her head in her quick way and looked at him archly. "It was love at first sight for both of us, then. But I didn't try to resist. I gave right in. There! Tell me you don't think the worse of me for saying so. Was it unmaidenly, you clever man?"

"Unmaidenly?" he echoed. "Is it ever unmaidenly for a woman to love with all her soul the man who adores her?"

The plausible enthusiasm with which he uttered these intoxicating words made them seem a complete refutation of her doubts. How masterful he was—so full of energy, so sensible and solid-looking, with his full, pleasant face and keen, discerning eyes. He was better than handsome. It would be blissful to entrust herself to a man like this. What joy to try to make him happy and to worship him. She would spruce him up a little; she noticed that his necktie was slightly frayed and that his trousers needed pressing. Otherwise he was perfect. She blushed under his searching gaze and sought refuge again on his firm shoulder.

"Where are we going to live?" she inquired as she nestled.

"On the water side of Beacon Street, of course."

Blaisdell had scarcely given a thought during the twelve months to social considerations. His business and his courtship had so monopolized his attention that, though his eyes had noted intelligently many other externals than the gilded grasshopper on Faneuil Hall, he had not indulged in philosophizing. But while his reply was in a measure parrot-like, the recollection of Lora's desire awoke in him a resolute, if slightly amused purpose to gratify it.

"You foolish boy," she said. "You don't forget anything, even my ridiculous speeches. You will see; I in-

tend to be one of those thrifty housewives who draw the purse-strings tightly—your purse-strings." She laughed musically, but it was evident that she wished him to realize how practical she could be even in the hour of her transport.

"Pooh!" He took one of her small, plump hands and patted it fondly between his. "You little frugal fascinator! I intend you to have everything there is to have, faster than you wish for it. To begin with—you see I've been mapping out our future during the past week—we'll take a little house in Brookline or Milton or Dedham—any of the suburbs you prefer—just for a starter—for a year or two. Then if things go right—and I intend they shall—we'll move in town and you shall have any house—any house, mind you—which you select. We won't spend any more money than I earn, of course, but if I make a lot, you won't have any excuse for economizing unless you're wilful."

"But I shall do so all the same; it will be good for us, Hugh. And I can be wilful, and very firm, if necessary. 'Not a cent to-day, sir, except your car-fare,' that's what I shall say."

"And I shall stop your mouth with pearls and diamonds, young lady. I dare say that a frugal soul would not be proof against a necklace of real pearls."

She gave one of her explosive laughs. "No, it wouldn't be."

"And as for the diamonds—here's just a sample of what you will have some day." So saying, he drew from the pocket of his coat a jeweller's box and held it out open.

"For me? Hugh—you are an angel." She clapped her hands in her delight as she gazed at the sparkling solitaire. It was a fine stone, though gaudily set. Blaisdell lifted the

ring from its case and slipped it onto her finger. Lora dropped her eyes and when she lifted them her cheeks were flushed.

"You brought it with you; you felt perfectly sure then?" There was a touch of piteous protest in her tone.

"Yes, I did. I had made up my mind to marry you. I didn't intend to let you escape. How could I, if I wished to be a successful man?" He looked like an indomitable cherub uttering a good-humored but unanswerable plea.

"I don't care if you did—because I love you so."

He caught her to his breast. Presently she held up her ring finger and surveyed the lustrous diamond. "I don't see why you didn't fall in love with Priscilla instead of me. She would be a splendid wife for a successful man."

"Excuse me for differing with you, young lady. For marrying—for marrying *me*, she isn't to be compared to my Lora."

The answer was on the tip of his tongue, as if he had pondered the question already and decided it to his complete satisfaction.

She nestled closer to him. "Of course I'm glad that you chose me, Hugh. But isn't she a glorious creature?"

"Glorious? Yes, she's glorious."

Somehow the lavish phrase seemed to disconcert Blaisdell a little. Did he resent such eulogy of one whom he had seen fit to pass over? "But—" He hesitated; it was evident that for once he was momentarily at a loss for the words to express his conviction.

"I may be pretty, but Priscilla is handsome; statuesque, mama calls her. And she has such spirit and is so tremendously in earnest."

Unconsciously Lora had supplied her lover with his cue.

"Too tremendously in earnest. Too much so for the

peace of mind of a hard-working man of affairs who, coming home tired at night, desires loving arms around his neck rather than problems. Yes, she's handsome and spirited, but she's too high-strung for me. Her spirit might run away with her. She would insist on my eating some particular kind of breakfast food." This concluding sally struck Blaisdell as a happy bit of justification and he laughed exuberantly.

Lora echoed his merriment, but she suggested at once—"Or make you economize against your will."

Then, inspired by commiseration which was pardonable in one so exceptionally happy, she murmured, "Poor Priscilla! If things had only gone as we hoped, she would be in the way of becoming a great lady." She rounded out her meaning by adding, "She was intended by nature to wear pearls and diamonds and to shine in the best society."

"Not any more than you," Blaisdell saw fit to remark, like one who resents a comparison. "Why, then, didn't she accept that diffident, obstinate scion of aristocracy who was haunting the house when I arrived here?"

Lora looked mysterious. It had been understood in the Avery household that Priscilla had snipped off the bud of hope with the scissors of fate—the figure of speech was Mr. Drake's—like a haughty gardener. At least, the young man from the water side of Beacon Street had vanished from the scene, and sundry melancholy confidences on the part of his landlady had produced on Blaisdell's much-occupied mind the impression that her step-daughter had thrown away an opportunity out of sheer caprice. But now that there could be no secrets between them, Lora felt justified in saying:

"I'm not perfectly sure he ever offered himself to her. Priscilla declares that he didn't. But she always laughs

when she says it. She declares, too, that he's too poor to marry—which, of course, must be sarcasm. Priscilla can be sarcastic, you know. I rather expected she would tell me all about it, and the evening after it happened—for something did happen—she started to while we were undressing, but she broke down laughing; and she ended by saying that his point of view merely proved that she had been right in her opinion of him from the beginning and that she wasn't going to talk about the matter further. So I really don't know much more than you, Hugh. But she persists that he never offered himself to her."

Blaisdell contracted his small eyes thoughtfully. It was clear to him that the shrewd little woman at his side was nursing a theory. "If I had nerves, the young man from the water side of Beacon Street would have got on them the evening I saw him; but I believed that he was in earnest; I didn't suppose that he would back out. Do you mean you think she is sorry now?" He asked the question somewhat searchingly.

Lora put her head on one side and glanced up at him with admiration. "What put that into your mind, I wonder? How clever you are! You know she has always declared that she couldn't abide him." She paused a moment and twisted contemplatively the new ring on her finger. "I feel sure, anyway, that she would have liked him to offer himself—what girl wouldn't after he had been so devoted?—and I really think, Hugh, she misses his attentions, though it would make her angry if she supposed we thought so. There's all I know—and I may be all wrong on that. I will tell you something else about her," she continued, rejoicing in the privilege of confiding all her secrets to the man she loved. "She is determined to earn her own living, and she's going to leave the Art School as soon

as she finds the right sort of place. Mama has assured her a dozen times that she counts on her staying at home until she marries; but Priscilla replies that she doesn't ever expect to be married, which is too silly to talk about. And yet——"

"Exactly like her," interrupted Blaisdell. "A woman ought always to take for granted that she is going to be married, just as a man should assume that he is going to get ahead. What's the use of being pessimistic at the start? It shows a screw loose somewhere."

Lora nodded. "But the point about Priscilla is that she intends to be tremendously particular; I don't mean that most girls necessarily snap up the first man who asks them, as I have; but Priscilla is different from most girls. She would prefer to die an old maid rather than marry the wrong person."

The naïveté of this utterance entertained Blaisdell, but he chose to add a colloquial moral. "Women of that sort do not always recognize a good thing when they see it. Consequently they are liable to be stranded."

"But her taste in men is good; I'm certain she admires you immensely," said Lora, without the slightest insinuation.

Blaisdell had suspected as much, but was glad to have his impression confirmed. "We are great friends, of course." He was not fond of being critical; he preferred to be generous. "You were saying that she had given up her art?"

"Oh, yes," resumed Lora, with a protesting gasp. "She is giving it up because she fears she hasn't great talent, because she thinks she has discovered that she can never be a genius. She says there are enough third-rate pictures and statues in the world already. Now, even if she's cor-

rect, it seems to me—take my case for instance; I could never be a prima donna; we were told that some time ago. But if you hadn't come along, I should have gone right on training my voice and sung in concerts or in church choirs and—and——"

"And now instead it will be a constant delight to your adoring husband. It was your voice which finished me on the spot.

'It will not do
I'm sorry for you'

Take my case for instance." He mimicked her lisp endearingly. "You sensible little being."

Blaisdell was in radiant spirits. All he heard of Priscilla served to convince him of the wisdom of his decision. "Why doesn't she stay at home then and be a comfort to her father in his declining years, like any normal daughter of the house?" he asked, not because he was hostile to woman's progress, but because he was so firmly convinced that the pinions of his future sister-in-law needed clipping.

"You may well ask. But she has a definite reason. She regards her father as a failure—financially, I mean. And I suppose he is, poor man. She isn't willing to be dependent, as she calls it, on mama any longer. As if the little she eats—why, the house won't be the same without her, and mama tells her so with tears in her eyes. But she's obdurate; she says she has made up her mind—her mighty mind. And now that you insist on carrying me off too so soon, you naughty man, I don't know what mama——"

Blaisdell smothered this feeble reproach by a mighty hug. He had no doubts as to Mrs. Avery's acquiescence —even her frank satisfaction—after a short outburst of tears. He felt sure that she liked him, and that she would

regard the match from an optimistic standpoint as soon as she had recovered from the disappointment which any mother is likely to feel when the news is broken to her that her only daughter is not going to marry a rich man.

The event proved that Blaisdell was right. The happy pair made a clean breast of their betrothal to Mrs. Avery that night on her return from the theatre. They took the opportunity to follow her when she had gone into the dining-room for a moment, and Lora bubblingly broke the news. Notwithstanding Mrs. Avery had permitted the affair to go on under her very nose without an effort to prevent the natural consequences, she was manifestly astonished.

"Engaged? Engaged to be married? You two children?" She put her hand to her breast to control her agitation.

"Yes, and we have come for your blessing," exclaimed Blaisdell, confronting her smilingly with his protecting arm round Lora's waist.

Mrs. Avery's eyes were like saucers from excitement; she, too, appeared all smiles for a moment, but suddenly she looked as if she were going to sneeze, which meant, as Lora well knew, that she was on the verge of tears.

"Oh," she cried, "it's too bewildering. I think I'm going to faint."

Blaisdell handily placed her in a chair and for a few moments she mopped her face with her handkerchief. Then presently her smile broke forth again like the sun after a shower; yet she whimpered lachrymosely, "My little Lora! It never occurred to me that such a thing could possibly happen for the next five years."

"I couldn't resist the cleverest man in the world, mama, could I? And you know that Hugh is a partner now—and

we are going to take a small house in the suburbs and be very economical."

"I know—I know," answered Mrs. Avery—(Blaisdell had told the family a few days before of his advancement) —"I'm not saying a word against Mr. Blaisdell personally. On the contrary, I've felt sure from the first day I set eyes on him that he was smart, and I wouldn't be a bit surprised—no, not a bit, as I was saying to Mr. Drake the other day—if he made a tremendous success. But—but I can't get used to the idea that any one should have my little Lora so soon. Why, Mr. Blaisdell—Hugh—she's a mere child." Mrs. Avery, though she had clearly capitulated, began to weep softly again.

"I'm nineteen, mama."

"And we shan't be married before April," said Blaisdell with the air of one who is magnanimously yielding something.

"Perhaps—if he is very nice to you, mama, in the meantime."

Thereupon Blaisdell, to show how nice he could be, put the finishing touch to the situation by stepping forward and embracing his future mother-in-law.

"It's all right. I'll take the best of care of your little girl—mama."

Such heartiness was the most bracing of tonics to Mrs. Avery's reviving spirits.

"I dare say. I guess so—Hugh. Well, I give her to you."

As soon as these decisive words were out of her mouth, Mrs. Avery's accustomed buoyancy began to reassert itself. She was not really sorry to have her daughter engaged. She, also, had heard that there were two hundred thousand more women than men in Massachusetts, and

while she would naturally have preferred what the world terms a brilliant match, she had ignored the growing intimacy between the two young people. Blaisdell was what she called her sort. There was no nonsense about him; he was uncommonly forcible and full of push and good nature. In the lottery of husbands whose future was not yet assured, she believed that he would prove to be a prize. Under the influence of these comforting reflections her spirits were rising every minute.

"That is what comes of taking boarders. And in a little more than a year, too. Married in April? This house will be a perfect desert—for Priscilla, foolish girl, has got a kink into her head that I don't want her." Thereupon Mrs. Avery was seized by a burning impulse to impart her news to the rest of the household.

"Gideon—Gideon! Priscilla—Priscilla! Come here at once. What do you suppose has happened?" Her exuberance negatived any possibility of a calamity; but she did not wait for her husband and step-daughter to hasten to the scene. Throwing open the door into the parlor, she cried:

"Lora and Mr. Blaisdell are engaged to be married. They've just announced it to me. Isn't it thrilling?"

In the congratulations which followed, gentle Mr. Avery was free to confess that he was completely surprised. But Priscilla could not allege such ignorance. On the contrary, she had realized for several months that they would marry some day. What delighted her now was their promptness in becoming engaged—in not waiting for their love to cool because they were too timid to face a possible wolf at the door. This thought was uppermost as she threw her arms around Lora's neck, and then turned to shake hands eagerly with the jubilant Blaisdell.

"It's splendid—ideal—a genuine love match! I congratulate you both—equally. I can't deny that I detected signs of what was coming—and it's just glorious that it has come now. Thank heavens, it's exactly what it ought to be—a genuine love match."

Her enthusiasm overshadowed that of Mrs. Avery. She was determined to let herself go. Was it not exactly the occasion to show her feelings unreservedly? Too many people at such a time failed to come up to the mark. There was her father, for instance, evidently pleased and wishing to say so, but practically tongue-tied from dread of seeming to presume.

"You must be my bridesmaid, Priscilla, dear."

"And you must consider our house yours—free to come to as often as you like and stay as long as you like, and the longer you stay the happier we shall be, Miss Priscilla."

Lora clapped her hands ecstatically, with an admiring look at her lover.

"That's just what I wanted to say and just what I mean. But it must be Priscilla and Hugh henceforth—no Miss and no Mr. You're relations—that is, going to be in May."

"The middle of April, not a day later, young lady."

"Mercy!" ejaculated Mrs. Avery. "It's almost as hasty as an elopement. I don't believe we can get her ready." Her gaiety, though tremulous again for an instant, belied her words.

"It came near being an elopement. I was ready," asserted Blaisdell. "It was only the wedding dress—the loss of the opportunity to——"

"I will break it off if you don't stop at once," lisped Lora.

Blaisdell with a beaming smile thrust his hands in his pockets and tactfully obeyed orders.

"I think elopements are rather fine," said Priscilla by way of consolation.

"Which proves for the hundredth time that you are a young lady of great discrimination, Priscilla. If it ever happens that I am free——"

Again it seemed superfluous for him to supply the ellipsis. Everybody laughed, though Lora made a pretence at pouting. The prompt use of her Christian name only served to heighten Priscilla's conviction that the speaker was a very human person, and she hastened to meet him half-way.

"It will be privilege enough to be your step-sister-in-law, Hugh. That's the relationship, isn't it?"

Lora indulged in one of her musical laughs. "Now you've both broken the ice."

"There is always the chance of divorce," suggested Morgan Drake, following the other thread of the dialogue. Mrs. Avery had summoned him from his room in the top story, and he had come down in his dressing-gown under the impression, so he declared, that the house was on fire.

The remark, though jocose, was liable to be misinterpreted, unless treated in the proper spirit. Blaisdell rose to the occasion by showing himself completely alive to his responsibilities as a lover.

"Even at the risk of disappointing my future step-sister-in-law, I solemnly declare that divorce is not one of the possible contingencies in this case."

"If, then, I remain unmarried to my death, you will all understand who is responsible."

Though she knew that she was simply throwing back the ball of raillery, Priscilla was conscious of flushing as she spoke; consequently she felt annoyed with herself. It was all a jest; even Lora was mirthful at the harmless

badinage. What excuse was there on her own part for embarrassment?

Blaisdell, noticing first the sparkle of her dark eyes as she flashed the words at him, thought nothing of the blush except that it was becoming. Therefore he was at a loss to understand why she should suddenly frown as though a pin had pricked her. He ascribed it to the idiosyncrasies of her skipping spirit. Moreover, he reflected that he had never seen her look handsomer. Yes, her beauty was of the statuesque order. If any man would undertake the task of training her, she had the makings of a wife of whom one might be proud. As an engaged man serenely content, he was ready to admit that he might not have done his step-sister-in-law entire justice.

By way of condoning his cynicism, Morgan Drake sat down at the piano and struck up Mendelssohn's wedding march with pedal accompaniment, much to Lora's confusion. But when he had finished, she immediately took his place and with meaning glances at Blaisdell proceeded to play the bars from "The Mikado," which had sealed his fate. Though she sang the words at him with exaggerated jauntiness, she did not attempt to conceal that her heart was overflowing with joy.

While the singing was going on, Mrs. Avery, to whom it had occurred that after such a surprise every one's nervous system needed to be toned up, was making the requisite preparations for a Welsh rabbit. When the ingredients were ready she summoned them all to the table, where presently the health of the engaged couple was drunk in foaming lager. The successful suitor acknowledged the courtesy by a few easy remarks in the course of which he made an apt allusion to every one present. His speech caused Mrs. Avery to whisper audibly to Morgan Drake,

who was sitting beside her, that just that sort of man was liable to be chosen President of the United States. Lora, who overheard, threw a kiss at her mother from the other end of the table.

"I didn't suppose any one else had thought of that, mama, except me."

Mrs. Avery had completely recovered her equilibrium. Indeed, her flow of spirits led her at the first favorable pause to disclose a conjugal secret.

"This seems to be a momentous day in our establishment. There's another member of it who is entitled to our congratulations."

So saying, she raised her decorated stone beer-mug. "Yes, I will, Gideon; you're much too modest," she continued by way of silencing her husband, who, having perceived too late what she was up to, showed signs of protesting. "Here's to the new invention! Mr. Avery believes he has discovered the missing link."

There was a general shout of satisfaction, after which every one, having drunk the toast, turned toward the inventor for confirmation of the statement.

"I'm so glad," exclaimed Lora rapturously. But Mr. Drake, whose face had become alert with sympathetic interest, raised his hand to enjoin silence, for Mr. Avery was preparing to rise.

"I thank you," he said with old-fashioned courtesy, looking round the table. "Mother has been a little premature, but I thank you. I will say this, however"—he nodded his head with wistful satisfaction as he weighed his words—"that if I am able to repeat successfully the experiments of the last week, I shall arrive at valuable practical results. In any event, I am sure that I am on the right track—sure of this." Thereupon he sat down.

This deprecating announcement fell so far short of her own dramatic assertion that Mrs. Avery was moved to expostulate.

"But you know, Gideon, you told me last evening——"

"Yes, I know, Olive," interposed her husband quickly. "But it is not necessary on this occasion to say more." His voice, though gentle, indicated plainly that he was issuing a command. He rarely did so, as she well knew. Ordinarily he gave her her head—or more exactly, the unbridled use of her tongue; but there were occasional moments like this when his word became law.

"Oh, very well, dear, I can keep a secret as well as anybody," she responded with good-humored emphasis.

"There is no secret—there is the difficulty. There is nothing definite. I was merely confiding to you my hopes."

As he spoke, however, his fine face lighted up as if, notwithstanding, he entertained an entrancing vision. To Morgan Drake, who was watching him, his expression was that of one who believes that he has wrested at last a truth from nature. But to Priscilla it signified only that he was nursing once more—was it not for the hundredth time?—a delusive hope. She had known him to talk like this—to look almost like this often before. She pitied him, she was almost annoyed with him for his unwillingness to recognize and submit to the inevitable. As she thus reflected, her eyes chanced to meet those of Blaisdell across the table and she read his thoughts, perceived that he felt the same—that he was good-naturedly but utterly sceptical as to the practical results of her father's experiments. The strong desire seized her to change the subject so as to hide his nakedness from further parade, for which filial purpose she had the means at her command. Indeed, she had been waiting for the proper moment at which to spring

one more surprise upon the household—a small one and yet a confession which sooner or later must be made.

She knocked on the table. "Ladies, gentlemen, and—lovers"—Priscilla was surprised at her own sprightliness, which struck her as germane neither to her preparatory thoughts nor to the coming announcement—"On this evening of almost universal confidences, listen to mine. The fact that I am shortly to leave this house in order to—er—follow my own peculiar bent is known, I believe, to all of you."

Her pause was just sufficient to allow Mrs. Avery to interject a protesting groan and for Morgan Drake and Blaisdell simultaneously to bang their mugs on the table and cry:

"Hear—hear."

As she resumed, Priscilla suddenly realized that she was addressing her future step-brother-in-law, but she did not alter the direction of her gaze. She hoped and believed that he, at least, would sympathize with her practical decision. Was it not in the line of his own energetic independence and self-reliance? But the interruption had checked the current of her speechifying, and she suddenly decided that such a small matter did not justify further circumlocution.

"It's only this—I'm engaged——"

As the words slipped out of her mouth, Priscilla could not resist the momentary roguish impulse to hesitate long enough to permit any one who chose to fall into the impromptu trap. Her step-mother proved the sole but easy victim.

"You too?" she shrieked. "Not to——"

"Miss Georgiana Chippendale, an elderly lady who lives on Beacon Street not far from the State House.

I'm to be her companion. I answered her advertisement this afternoon and—and so far we suit one another. That's the whole story."

In the hubbub of remarks and inquiries directed at her, Priscilla distinguished first Blaisdell's glib words of encouragement—"I wish you success and I admire your grit." He understood, at least, and appeared to sympathize with her. Secondly, her step-mother's amazed afterthought following a previous ejaculation of dismay.

"Advertisement? Chippendale? Why, then it must be some relative of Mr. Sumner's. Mr. Henry Chippendale Sumner, of course. That's on his card."

Lora exploded convulsively. She knew the blue book well enough to assert:

"She's his aunt."

Priscilla felt herself at bay, but she was in a measure prepared for the emergency; the family must enjoy its little joke. "Yes, she's his aunt," she answered doggedly. "I don't see what difference it makes if she is; but if it will make you feel any better, I hereby announce that I didn't know it until after I had answered the advertisement. Only the number of the house was given. I don't see really, though, what difference it would make if I had known." She surveyed the mocking faces defiantly. For a moment no one seemed disposed to break a lance with the haughty maiden on the point involved, and then the resonant voice of Mrs. Avery was heard to exclaim:

"You didn't know? Then I should call it fate, my dear."

Manifestly absurd as this sally was in her opinion, Priscilla felt herself the butt of plausible merriment. It was Blaisdell who came to her rescue with a phrase the epigrammatic quality of which reminded one of Morgan Drake.

"Fate or fiddlesticks!" he said with sententious emphasis.

Priscilla's eyes sparkled with gratitude. The alliterative phrase furnished just the proper antidote to her stepmother's ridiculous insinuation. Leaning forward on her elbows with clasped hands, she looked into his face.

"That's it exactly: fate or fiddlesticks! And in saying so you've proved, Mr. Blaisdell—Hugh, I mean—that you're better even than a step-brother-in-law; you're my avenging angel."

"Which proves conclusively," said Mr. Avery after a pause, in his demure way, "that it must be fiddlesticks."

CHAPTER IX

Said Harrison Chippendale to his son Chauncey, one morning after breakfast about five years later: "Who is this Hugh McD. Blaisdell mentioned in the circular relative to the reorganization of the Warrior Mills?"

There had been a period when Mr. Chippendale felt that he knew everybody in Boston worth knowing. That this was no longer so, was among the most disconcerting of all the rapid changes to which he had been a witness. The mere physical expansion of his native city, including the twelve-story office buildings and the thundering "electrics" which were replacing the time-honored congested horse-car service, was astonishing, yet not to be marvelled at by one who did not expect the world to stand still. But not to know who people were—to see strangers forcing their way into prominence without being more explicitly vouched for—was disturbing to one who was accustomed to hear the

men at his dinner club either discuss the heroes and battles of the Civil War or reverently recall anecdotes of those prodigies Daniel Webster and Rufus Choate. A casual mention of Blaisdell's name at one of these functions had first opened his eyes to the existence of such a person; and here it was cropping up again.

"Hugh McD. Blaisdell?" Chauncey's interrogation was an echo of his surprise. "If it were any one but you, father, I should reply that ignorance as to who he is argues yourself unknown. Down-town, that is. He's one of the rising luminaries on the State Street horizon; some people say *the* rising luminary. He moves quickly when he does move, I'll say that of him. It was he who bought up the stock of the Puritan Gas Company when it was kicking round under par and sold it to Cogswell and his gang at 175. It was he who conceived and syndicated the Bay State Hotel, so there is now some prospect that all the things you eat at a public restaurant in Boston won't taste alike. Lately he has turned his attention to reorganizations; he has galvanized and put new blood into several financial corpses. And now he is trying his hand at resuscitating the old Warrior Mills."

"By new blood do you mean water? Horatio Langdon said I was lucky when he sold ours at 40."

"I know, father. Everybody thought so at the moment. The mills are old-fashioned and require new machinery throughout and up-to-date buildings. But of course the good will is valuable; 'Warrior' is an excellent trade-mark. There's where the cleverness comes in. Blaisdell has formed a pool to raise the necessary capital by an issue of bonds with a bonus of new stock; and I understand that he has the whole thing underwritten."

Mr. Chippendale was silent a moment. Though he had

consistently avoided any further contact with commercial transactions than was necessary for the protection of the family inheritance, as the son of one of Boston's leading merchants he deemed himself thoroughly conversant with traditional business methods and standards. Doubtless he had been; but he himself was the first to acknowledge his ignorance of this modern finance—syndicates, underwritings, reorganizations—as well as to shake his head over it. To him most of this seemed gambling, but Chauncey had strenuously pointed out that there was no logical moral distinction between buying stocks on an ample margin and borrowing on bills of lading, as the old-fashioned merchants did—and had cited as examples both his grandfather Chippendale and his grandfather Baxter who had dealt in merchandise—cargoes of sugar, hemp and molasses, instead of certificates of railroads, electric-light plants and industrial corporations.

"As to knowing people down-town, Chauncey, it is I who am practically unknown." Mr. Chippendale intended that this magnanimous admission should illustrate appallingly the degeneracy of the business world. "I am not much beyond my prime," he continued, laying down his newspaper to mark the seriousness of what he was about to utter, "and yet I can remember when Boston was a city of less than a hundred thousand inhabitants. To-day it has a population of nearly half a million. My father was one of the few people—they could be counted on the fingers of one hand—who kept his own carriage. He dined at half-past two o'clock. I was, I think, the first person in Boston to advance my dinner-hour to five o'clock, and I was characterized as ultra-fashionable because of it. Now we try to stick to seven, but since your sister Georgiana came out our dinner-parties, as you know, have been

at half-past, and only yesterday your mother intimated that unless we were content to be regarded as old-fashioned, we must have them at eight henceforth. No one can accuse me of undue conservatism; your uncle Baxter, for instance, and your Aunt Georgiana continue to live on Beacon Hill and both still dine at half-past two; I have always sought to keep abreast of the times. But with all these innovations social and financial—in manners and men—balls which cost several thousands and fortunes amassed over night, I do not see where we are coming out as individuals or a people. And as to national politics——"

"I'm a bull on this country for a long pull, father; the man who goes short of it is sure to come out at the small end of the horn," interposed Chauncey, who in his capacity as an embryo banker and a loyal member of the Republican Club felt moved to resent these strictures. He knew almost by heart his father's unfavorable estimate of both the great parties. "By the way, I heard Blaisdell the other day make exactly that reply to a doubting Thomas who was predicting financial disaster. That fellow has a magnetic way of stating things. The same words in another man's mouth," he continued with a smile, "don't sound half so convincing; but I believe that the remark is true just the same, though I understand perfectly what you mean, father, and I sympathize to a certain extent with your criticisms."

Mr. Chippendale's lip trembled. Pessimistic as he was regarding the political outlook, he had not renounced the hope that his son might succeed in the line where he himself had been disappointed—might some day win distinction in public affairs. If Chauncey could conscientiously sit on either party platform, so much the better for him, though he himself could not. "I am glad, of course,

to see that you are patriotic," he said fervently, and then, by way of obviating the necessity of more compromising euphemisms, he inquired: "So you know this Mr. Blaisdell?"

"I have met him in a business way. He's a perfect wonder both at anticipating what the public needs and at putting things through. He would interest you, I think. He has been only six years on the Street, yet every one who has a new scheme to float takes it first to Blaisdell. If he goes in, there's sure to be good money in it."

Mr. Chippendale winced a little both at the renewal of the lingo and because he was unpleasantly reminded that while every one else appeared to be growing rich, he was steadily becoming poorer. How long it seemed since he had listened to Ralph Waldo Emerson's lectures and resolved to obey the injunction to hitch his wagon to a star!

"It is not probable that we shall ever meet," he said dryly.

"One can never tell nowadays, father. He's not our sort exactly, I admit, but he's making money hand over fist, and a few people who count are taking him up. I heard a rumor the other day that he's looking for a house on Commonwealth Avenue. At present he lives somewhere in the suburbs, I believe." Then uttering the thought which suddenly occurred to him, Chauncey exclaimed, "You might let him have ours. He wouldn't mind paying a good price, if it happened to suit him."

Mr. Chippendale shuddered, but it was because his secret had been suddenly exposed. He knew that Chauncey knew that he was spending more than he could afford, and that he was harassed by the increase in the cost of living, but he had never confided to him that he had for the past six months been considering the very mortifying

step of putting the Commonwealth Avenue house into the hands of a broker for sale. But he answered like one resolved to set up every available obstacle. "We must stay here at least until your sister Georgiana is married. After she and you have left us, we should not need so large a house. Besides, where should we go?"

"That's easy. Remain on the North Shore all winter. All you would need is a larger furnace. The girls could make visits and mama and Georgiana might take apartments at a hotel for a month or two during the dancing season."

"At a hotel?" groaned Mr. Chippendale. "Your mother would not fancy that." Indeed, the entire programme was bewildering to one who could recall the time when no good Bostonian went to the seaside earlier than the 20th of June, and every one planned to return before the equinoctial storm traditionally due the last week in September.

"There's no use in trying to keep up appearances when we haven't got the money."

There was an unequivocal frankness about this statement which caused Mr. Chippendale's lip to tremble again with approbation. He was proud that his son had been the first to betray sensitiveness on such a point. "Certainly not, Chauncey; you know me too well for that," he said, and each looked at the other understanding that no further words were necessary.

But Chauncey chose to philosophize on the situation. "It's rotten to be poverty-stricken nowadays," he declared. "One needs so many things."

"Poverty-stricken? We are very far from poverty-stricken," answered Mr. Chippendale with stately emphasis. "You must not forget, Chauncey, that when my

father died I was regarded as one of the wealthiest men in Boston."

"Yes, sir, I know. But we are paupers now—relatively speaking, of course, yet to all intents and purposes paupers according to the standards of the day. I doubt if you realize, father, what stacks of money some of your friends and many others all around us have been accumulating in railroads, mines and industrials."

"How you young people—of both sexes—love to exaggerate! The standards of the day are responsible for that, too; extravagance in expenditure goes hand in hand with extravagance in speech. As an example, take one indecorous word which you use—girls as well as men—the word 'rotten.' Everything of which you do not entirely approve is rotten; the most inappropriate subject—a rainy day, a woman's dress, an inartistic building, a dull book or sermon—is rotten. Up-town the favorite slang is 'rotten'; down-town it appears to be 'industrial.'"

Chauncey laughed appreciatively. Every now and then his father showed himself unexpectedly discerning in regard to ordinary mundane matters. He was wont to think of him as more or less on a pedestal absorbed in the larger philosophies of life, but occasionally he revealed that he had been cognizant all the time of what was going on under his eyes. "It's no worse than 'beastly' among the English, is it? Simply a case of what Professor Paton used to call poverty of language."

"Exactly, and therefore a social blemish."

"And as to the other word—we are an industrial nation. But it's true, father; compared to other people, our particular branch of the family is hard up." Chauncey thrust his hands in the side pockets of his well-fitting sack coat and rocked himself on his heels, as if to imply that further

argument on that point would be wasted on him. "But that reminds me, speaking of the very rich, I saw by the list of stockholders that Uncle Baxter and Aunt Georgiana still have their Warrior Mills shares."

"I know," said Mr. Chippendale with a sigh. "They could afford to hold them. Your Uncle Baxter never sold anything in his life."

"And he can't spend more than one quarter of his income. They say on the Street that he is nearly fat enough to kill, just rotten with money—excuse me, father—rolling in accumulated riches, reams on reams of municipal bonds and gilt-edged certificates which have quadrupled in value since he bought them. He doesn't speculate in the modern sense, but all his investments keep hatching eggs. Aunt Georgiana must ante up more or less for the diffusion of culture and for charities, but," he added with a chuckle, "the story is she makes it up in wildcats on the sly."

Mr. Chippendale frowned, but it was from doubt as to the meaning of the last word. He knew that no disrespect was intended by these colloquialisms and mixed metaphors. He was familiar with the free and easy language of the rising generation, even where their elders were concerned, dissimilar as it was to the mode of address when he was young.

"Low-priced mining shares, brand-new inventions, things in which there may be a fortune, but which generally prove waste paper," Chauncey explained. "I know she had Telephone from the start. Mr. Langdon told me so."

"Did she really?" said Mr. Chippendale soberly. Telephone was one of those marvellous cases in point which had "hatched" many "eggs" for people he knew. "Yes, with their exemption from extraordinary expenses, they must be wealthy by this time."

"And both are wonderfully well preserved; look as if they were good for ninety."

Mr. Chippendale frowned again, this time from disrelish of the insinuation, although he knew that it was merely jocose and emanated from that current lack of reverence which was liable to indulge in humor even beside the open grave. This appeared to be one of the privileges of the young in a democratic country.

He said, "You remember your Aunt Georgiana did not approve of your becoming a stock-broker, and your Uncle Baxter is—er—a peculiar man."

Chauncey laughed and responded, "Oh, yes, I'm quite prepared to see Harvard and the Tech and the Massachusetts General Hospital get it all so far as I'm concerned. That makes it the more imperative for me to grow rich on my own account."

"It is one thing to be a stock-broker, another to buy stocks for investment," said his father. "Aunt Georgiana merely was desirous to see you emulate the—er—standards of the Chippendales and either become a merchant or follow one of the learned professions, displaying incidentally a proper interest in civic affairs. You know, Chauncey, that while Langdon's offer was flattering, of course, I myself have never been entirely reconciled to your choice of an occupation. This and the circumstance that you were selected from the foot-ball squad rather than the rank list were two of the great surprises of my life. I know what you will answer," continued Mr. Chippendale, putting up his hand to prevent any interruption on the part of his smiling, immaculate-looking son. "You will say, as you have a dozen times already, that it's the fashion—the correct thing, as you call it—for a young man who desires to make money quickly to go into a broker's office—be-

come a broker of some kind, stock-broker, note-broker, cotton-broker, real-estate broker, but a broker of some kind; generally and preferably, it seems, a stock-broker."

"Because it's the surest way to make money quickly, don't you see, father? We have to in order to get married before we're fifty; otherwise we can't give the girls what they are accustomed to."

Chauncey rose as he concluded and, buttoned his coat, for it was time to go down-town.

"An aristocracy of stockholders is an anomaly." It was on the tip of Mr. Chippendale's tongue to enlarge upon this pungent statement, but he refrained. After his son had departed he did not at once return to his newspaper. It was becoming more and more apparent to him not only that the spirit of the times had changed lamentably for the worse but that his son had become inoculated with it. Yet, on the other hand, he could not deny that Chauncey had taken hold of his work with ardor and was now at the end of five years occupying a responsible position with his employers, Langdon & Company, who held out hopes of a junior partnership in the dim future. This was something to be proud of, and, of course, he was proud of him. But, at the same time, the whole trend of society was so repugnant to his traditions, that he found himself continually in a state of bewilderment.

Mr. Chippendale sighed once more and picked up his newspaper again, which he read carefully for half an hour, at the end of which he cast it aside with a grunt —evidently dissatisfied with the contents. At ten o'clock he started to walk down-town, by way of Commonwealth Avenue, the Public Garden and Beacon Street. In the Public Garden he scrutinized the trees to make sure that the city forester was attending to his duty, and de-

plored to himself the garish horticultural taste displayed in the embellishment of the flower-beds. Secretly he rather admired the general enlivening effect, but he had been informed by certain critics that the place was a hotch-potch of heterogeneous trees and shrubs; moreover, he cherished suspicions that the public official in charge supported an army of cousins and other political retainers in caring for them. Half-way up Beacon Street he turned into the Common in order to observe the squirrels. It was one of his pet grievances—one more sign of the changing times—that most of the squirrels had disappeared. At one period—when he was a young man—they were a feature of the mall, sleek, aristocratic-looking fellows, with long, bushy tails, who frisked unmolested among the elms. He had habitually carried a few nuts in his pocket with which to entice them—though they had stood in no need of his bounty. There had been two so tame that they allowed him to scratch their heads. But the number had been steadily diminishing so that now there were only two on the entire mall, and these were timid and draggled-looking. On this particular morning not one was in sight; from which Mr. Chippendale mournfully concluded that some cat or dog or ruthless boy must have killed them. His indignation rose at the thought, for twice within the past year he had sent a communication on the subject to the *Transcript*, signed with his initials, in which he had urged protection of the squirrels on the score that they sucked the eggs of the English sparrows and so might be made efficient allies against these prolific pests. But thus far the authorities had failed to act on his suggestion. Not infrequently on his way down-town he called on his sister Georgiana, and the hope of interesting her in his grievance moved him to do so now.

Miss Georgiana Chippendale was a woman of wide sympathies and abundant energy, who invariably lent a sympathetic ear not only to the wrongs of the oppressed, but to every philanthropic, educational or æsthetic novelty. She made liberal contributions to many charities, but her moral support was no less valuable than her money, for in whatever cause she happened to be absorbed—and there was at least one new one each year—she showed herself an indefatigable partisan and fertile in resources.

As has been indicated already, she still clung to Beacon Hill not far from its crest, in the vicinity of the State House. Her brother Baxter lived on Park Street, scarcely more than a stone's throw away. Hers was the old family mansion, the windows of which commanded the Common. Its stoop was guarded by an old-fashioned iron railing which curved away on either side of the steps until it wound itself into two circular posts each surmounted by a shining brass knob. The glass over the front door was fan-shaped, the door itself white, with a ponderous handle of the same metal as the bell and the solid, carefully polished door-plate on which the name "Chippendale" was engraved in script.

Miss Chippendale's equipage, a brougham with two horses, was in front of the house at the moment her brother rang. When there was sleighing, she substituted for this vehicle a booby-hut, so called—the same which her mother had used and one of the last of its pattern—a closed carriage on runners attached to a curving framework and sunk so low that the bulky body almost touched the ground. As the servant opened the door, she was standing in the front hall dressed to go out, and evidently not disposed to linger, for her welcome, though sisterly, was incisive.

"Well, Harrison, what is it?"

In the next breath, as if she could not resist the temptation to exult, she added: "I told you not to sell your Warrior Mills. I knew they wouldn't go begging long."

"With my expensive family I couldn't afford to take the risk. If I had been you or Baxter, I would have held on."

"The trouble with you, Harrison, is that instead of controlling your expenses you let your expenses control you. Those girls of yours are eating you out of house and home. Why don't they get married?"

Like her brother Baxter, Miss Chippendale was portly, but she was taller than he and not so stout, an advantage which she ascribed to taking what she called regular exercise and avoiding water between meals. Her features were rather plain, but strongly marked and individual—a good-sized roman nose, a firm, pleasant though large mouth, and quick-moving, humorous eyes which, though they probed the person she was gazing at, were also the mirror of her own emotions. She was a fine-looking woman for sixty-five, and she habitually stated that she was strong as a horse. Certainly she looked so. Her feminine contemporaries were apt to declare that she was more nearly handsome than ever before in her life. This was an exaggeration, of course, though she had not been what could be termed a pretty girl. Moreover, at twenty-one she had been stiff and a sufferer from the self-conscious conviction that the young men who paid her attentions were attracted by her money. Now she knew that no one wished to marry her, and she was equally sure that she did not wish to marry any one. But she had her five nieces a little on her mind.

"Georgie has several young men devoted to her, I believe. I stopped to speak about the squirrels."

As he spoke, Mr. Chippendale drummed lightly with his cane on the tiles of the vestibule. He was standing on the brush mat between the doors and his way appeared to be blocked, for Miss Georgiana, who was on the threshold of the inner door, attended by a maid carrying the carriage rug and some parcels, showed no disposition to let him in. But whatever the upshot might have been had not Miss Chippendale suddenly remembered something, it happened that she wheeled about and, abandoning her position, walked sturdily back to the hall.

"Miss Avery?" she cried at the foot of the staircase. Thereupon Mr. Chippendale took advantage of the opportunity to step inside. As he glanced at the familiar objects in the high-studded but narrow hall, at the marble bust in one corner and the ornamental card-receiver on a stand in another, and at the gilt clock on the frame under the looking-glass, he listened for the pleasant voice of his sister's factotum. He thought well of the young woman in question. During the five years of her employment as secretary and companion, she had conducted herself with such propriety and tact as to win the approbation of the entire family, each one of whom had come more or less in contact with her. Was she not bright, spirited and energetic, with plenty to say for herself, yet ladylike in deportment? Just the person Georgiana needed to answer her correspondence and attend to the details of the thousand and one things she was interested in. And he judged that she had displayed sense in the matter of her relations with his nephew Henry Sumner. If there had ever been anything serious in that affair, evidently it had blown over; which was to her credit, for a designing girl might have taken advantage of such youthful infatuation.

Priscilla came tripping downstairs in response to the summons.

"You may send the cheque for fifty dollars on my desk to the Treasurer of the Home for Superannuated Actors. He wrote a week ago that their accounts for last year show a deficit. Those poor little widows have driven everything else out of my head."

Miss Chippendale continued, turning toward her brother after giving this direction, "Just fancy, Harrison, being married when a mere child to a man old enough to be your grandfather and then being ostracized, treated as the scum of the earth, because you don't insist on lying down on his funeral pile and being cremated with him although it is forbidden by law. Bisesa Dass says it's all true. She lectures, and has come out from India to raise money to educate the poor little things and help change public sentiment out there. She has brought letters to me, and—and here are four tickets." Miss Chippendale, having fumbled for a moment in the little reticule she carried, produced them. "I've agreed to be responsible for fifty. You needn't pay anything, but I expect your girls to be present—at this house next Wednesday at four—and Georgiana to pour tea. Miss Avery has been sitting up at night getting out the circulars. We can't afford to fold our hands in Boston and let persecution like that continue, especially now that this wonderful telephone is going to bring the whole world within speaking distance. 'The Emancipation of the Suttee,' that's the title of the lecture, and I've got all my patronesses—a stunning list. People are curious to see Bisesa Dass in her Hindoo costume."

"She's a suttee herself—was a widow at twelve, Mr. Chippendale," explained Priscilla. "Only think of that."

"And there will be lantern-slides illustrative of other

oriental superstitions and of oriental scenery," added Miss Chippendale majestically.

"Under the personal supervision of Mr. Henry Sumner," added Priscilla by way of completing the programme, and because that feature of it amused her a little.

"Which will atone in some measure," said Miss Chippendale, "for his conduct about his wall-paper. He has looked pale lately, Harrison, and I was convinced that there was arsenic in his wall-paper. I offered to have it tested and to pay the expense of a new one. But he wouldn't consent. He declared it was only a Boston fad. It appears some doctor or other had told him people in New York never have arsenic-poisoning from wall-paper. As if that made any difference."

Mr. Chippendale shook his head disapprovingly. "It was just like Henry. If he is not careful, his positive views will blast his future career. No one admires independence more than I do, but a young lawyer should cultivate tact if he desires to get ahead." Apart from the merits of this particular instance, Mr. Chippendale was glad of an opportunity to keep the balance even, so far as his sister's favor was concerned, between his son and Henry. She might disapprove of Chauncey's choice of an occupation, but it was only fair to point out that her other grown-up nephew was not perfect.

"Well, Henry has his faults like the rest of us; but I admire a man who's not a mush. And there's one thing about him, he's a regular Chippendale."

"Of course he's a Chippendale; his mother was a Chippendale." It was clear that he regarded his sister's remark as superfluous. "I only meant that I should like to see him a little less—er—uncompromising."

"Well, there's some one who agrees with you," she said,

indicating Priscilla. "*She* professes to believe that he's obstinate as a mule."

"Not quite so bad as that, Miss Chippendale," answered Priscilla with a laugh. The fact that she was suddenly appealed to made her aware that she had not for a long time asked herself squarely what she did think of her impecunious lover. She had somehow taken for granted that her opinion of him had remained unaltered in every particular since the day when he had naïvely explained why he could not offer himself to her. And yet, as she hastily collected her wits in order to meet her employer's embarrassing challenge, she became conscious that the intervening five years had thrown new lights on that particular charge; conscious that she knew now not merely that he had really been impecunious from the standpoint of his family and friends at the time of their ridiculous interview, but had been actuated during it solely by delicate consideration for her. In other words, that he had been faithful to an ideal, though wofully clumsy. She must not deny or begrudge him this justice, whatever else she thought of him.

"I see so little of Mr. Sumner that I have not much opportunity of judging how obstinate he can be," she said pleasantly.

"And whose fault is that, I should like to know?" retorted Miss Chippendale, who, even where matters of the heart were concerned, was likely to be blunt.

"Of course he is very much occupied with his profession," replied Priscilla glibly.

"Gammon," ejaculated Miss Georgiana.

But the explanation impressed Mr. Chippendale and caused him to offer Priscilla moral support. Perhaps he did not like to hear his sister even in jest encourage a ro-

mance of which she must profoundly disapprove. "I fancy that a young lawyer who desires to succeed must give his entire mind to his business."

"I'm sure it must be so, Mr. Chippendale," said Priscilla with a laugh.

"But young men's employments have changed since my day," he resumed. "When I first went down-town I was expected to be there at eight o'clock and my duties were menial—to build the fire, sweep out the office and clean the inkstands. I fancy the experience did me good."

"I doubt it, Harrison," exclaimed his sister.

Priscilla might have taken advantage of Miss Chippendale's attention being thus diverted to avoid further reference to her relations with Henry Sumner. Until recently she had assumed that her employer, like the rest of the family, was grateful to her for having nipped his youthful hopes in the bud. They had never discussed the matter openly, but she had gathered both that Miss Chippendale was aware of what had happened, and was disposed to make fun of Henry's matrimonial intentions. But she thought she had detected lately signs of a purpose on her part to throw them together. More than once when his name had been introduced Miss Chippendale had made excuses for him—though decidedly annoyed by his attitude regarding the ravages of arsenic. These were merely straws which might mean nothing. But if, on the other hand, they were taken as indications that Miss Chippendale was disposed to aid her nephew's cause, ought she not, since she had been treated practically like a daughter, to make clear from the start that such an attitude would only be a waste of time and result in disappointment? Plainly it was her duty to do this, and the present seemed

a favorable opportunity for showing how little real sympathy there was between herself and Henry. Therefore she said:

"I must admit that when we do meet we are very sure to disagree." Then she added staunchly, "And, besides being a little uncompromising, the pet bone of contention between Mr. Sumner and me has always been that he is so inclined to pick flaws in the things which other people are trying to accomplish." The summary pleased her; she felt that she had stated her case succinctly.

"The reason is obvious, dear—because he is so full of enthusiasms," responded Miss Georgiana.

"Obvious? Enthusiasms? Enthusiasms?" Priscilla gasped in her dismay. "I consider him one of the least enthusiastic persons I ever met in my life." This might sound like a liberty, privileged as she was in the household, but she could not refrain from expressing her astonishment and dissent.

"Then you can't know him very well, after all—not so well as I hoped you did," said Miss Georgiana, with a toss of her head. "If you don't believe me, wait and see—wait and see."

"But Henry does strike one at times as a little too visionary in practical affairs," remarked Mr. Chippendale, drumming gently with his cane.

"Come, Harrison, make yourself useful and give me your arm down these slippery steps. What was that about the squirrels?"

"The last two have disappeared. They have not been there for two mornings. You saw my second letter in the *Transcript*."

Miss Chippendale frowned solicitously. "It's an outrage. Miss Avery," she added, "write to the Society for

the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and say that my annual subscription of fifty dollars will not be continued unless something is done and done at once about the squirrels on the Common."

"Thank you, Georgiana. That ought to produce results if anything can," said Mr. Chippendale, and he offered his arm to his sister, who had reached the vestibule. She took it, but judging by the resolute manner in which she trudged down the steps, it may be reasonable to assume that she had invited his assistance because she had something private to say. For, as she clutched his sleeve, she drew him toward her and whispered:

"Buy Electric Coke, Harrison."

"What?"

"Buy Electric Coke."

"What's that?"

"A stock—a newly patented invention. You didn't have any Telephone, you remember. I did and it has treated me uncommonly well. This may be another." She spoke eagerly, as though thrilled by the possibility.

So Chauncey was right; Georgiana was speculating. The entire social order seemed bewitched—turned topsy-turvy. "I know. But I never speculate." There was a plaintive note in Mr. Chippendale's voice—the severity of high principle chastened by constant bewilderment. "But it was very kind of you to speak of it."

She paused with her foot on the step of the brougham, whispering so that the coachman should not overhear, "Don't be a fool. Buy it. Don't you ever change your investments?"

"Occasionally," he said, with the dignity of one who feels himself again on firm ground.

"Then what's the distinction? If an investment goes

wrong it's a speculation, and if a speculation goes right it's an investment."

While her brother was weighing this specious proposition she climbed into her carriage, but as soon as she was seated she put her face across the window, still close to his.

"Mr. Blaisdell says it's going up."

Her mysterious tone indicated that she named an authority which would be deemed indisputable. It disclosed also delight at the possession of secret knowledge.

"Mr. Blaisdell?" Mr. Chippendale's amazement and disgust were so great that he involuntarily asked, "Who is he?" But in the same breath he added, "Yes—yes, I know. But where have you met him, Georgiana?" It did not seem credible that this newcomer, however omnipresent, had succeeded in invading the privacy of so ultra-conservative a spot as Beacon Hill near the State House.

But he was doomed to experience just this shock, administered with gusto, for his sister was burning to furnish the final proofs of her sagacity.

"I met him here. He came to call on Priscilla—my Miss Avery. He's her brother-in-law. We got talking and he explained it all to us—and in the most convincing way. Electricity manufactured out of coal—a brand-new process. If it succeeds, commercially as he calls it—and Mr. Blaisdell thinks it's bound to be a success—there may be a fortune in it. The stock has only just begun to rise." Miss Chippendale's eyes gleamed as the result of the vision they beheld. "It's a risk; you may lose all you put into it; I won't deny that, Harrison." But, after emphasizing the word, she tapped him on the sleeve and putting her lips still closer to his ear continued triumphantly, "But when I inform you that the man who invented the process is Miss Avery's own father, and that Mr. Hugh

Blaisdell is his son-in-law, you'll see that I'm not stark, staring crazy. Now do as you like." Thereupon Miss Chippendale said imperatively to the coachman, "You may drive on, Thomas," and sat back against her cushions. Before her brother had time to comment appropriately on what he had heard, her brougham was under way.

CHAPTER X

MR. CHIPPENDALE resumed his walk down-town in a perturbed frame of mind. The fact that his sister Georgiana had confirmed by her own words the suspicion, which Chauncey had awakened, that she had a secret habit of risking money in hazardous ventures, was disconcerting, but not so much so as that she should be on familiar terms with this Mr. Blaisdell. As for the money, she was a spinster and had more than she could spend. He did not approve of the propensity; it was contrary to Chippendale ideals and the sound business principles of the Baxters; but his sister appeared to be shrewd or at least lucky—had she not made a ten-strike in Telephone? —and evidently she had confided in him in order to do him a good turn. But her acquaintance with Blaisdell stuck in his aristocratic crop.

Nor was the shock caused him by her reception at her own house of this rising luminary of State Street—a man on whom he himself had never set eyes—entirely neutralized by the coincidence that Blaisdell happened to be Miss Avery's brother-in-law. It was to be expected that his sister Georgiana in the course of promoting the live movements of the day should be brought in contact more or less

with persons in a different walk of life—foreigners like Bisesa Dass, major or minor celebrities who presented letters of introduction, and pioneers in æsthetic or philanthropic reforms. As one who stood in the van of progress himself, although not an active worker, he understood that this must be so. But the present case was essentially different. Blaisdell desired a permanent footing in Boston, and had been in business there but a short time. It behooved such a man to be modest; yet he had been making abnormally rapid progress. This was well enough on State Street, but it appeared that he had social ambitions; at least, Chauncey had intimated that certain people were taking him up. The mental picture which Mr. Chippendale drew was of a plausible upstart, who, as he chose to believe, had gained his sister's confidence, if not admittance to her house, by thrusting himself forward unduly. That this judgment was not supported by actual evidence —that it might, indeed, be the product of a kink in his own brain—Mr. Chippendale was subconsciously aware; nevertheless, he felt convinced that he was right. He had no intention of buying Electric Coke; to do so would be contrary to his principles. A more serious concern was that he might be tempted to sell his Commonwealth Avenue house to this forth-putting person.

His spirits were not improved by stopping at the Athenæum Library, for he found that every new book which he wished to read had been taken out. Having mentioned the fact at the desk, he was informed that in order to be certain of obtaining anything new, it would be necessary to be there as early as the library was opened. Until recently he had been accustomed to find something desirable left. Mr. Chippendale deplored the extension of modern enterprise to literary haunts and mournfully re-

flected that there were beginning to be too many people in Boston.

He still maintained a small office where he employed a single clerk. This venerable retainer, who had been in his father's service and who continued to believe that the name of Chippendale was the barometer of local opinion in all matters commercial or social, kept the books of the Chippendale estate, an elaborately neat if solemn process. Chauncey referred to him occasionally as a fuddy-duddy, and advised pensioning him, a suggestion which struck Mr. Chippendale as flippant and almost heartless. The latter relied on his subordinate for all routine information. He himself merely looked the ledgers over casually once a year and endorsed the dividend cheques of his factory shares as they became due. Mr. Chippendale's habit was to visit his office twice a week, Mondays and Thursdays. What he had to do there, including the perusal of another newspaper and the feeding of some tame city pigeons who flew down to the window-sill from their shelter in the eaves, ordinarily occupied him less than three-quarters of an hour. After this it was his custom to drop in at Horatio Langdon & Company, the bankers. He had done so for years, long before Chauncey had been summoned from the football field to a position there. The practice was analogous in his mind to what in his father's time had been termed going on 'Change—the days when the old-fashioned merchants dropped in about noon at the marine insurance offices to underwrite maritime risks. Chauncey had inquired once in a perverse mood what wagering that a certain vessel would not founder at sea was if not gambling. This remark, too, had appeared to him flippant. He himself was no social censor, no moral ascetic; there was plenty of sporting blood in his veins, and he had always

been regarded as the progressive member of the family. He comprehended perfectly that the man who could make two dollars grow where there was only one before was no less to be revered than he who could do the same with blades of grass; but was there not a wide difference between this and modern wholesale speculation? His half-weekly visits to Horatio Langdon's office were ostensibly for the purpose of hearing how this or that mill was doing and of inquiring the price of cotton, the staple on which their profits were based; incidentally he heard the current gossip of the day, how large a property this acquaintance had left and how rapidly the country was going to the devil.

It may be truly said of Mr. Chippendale that while he was musing the fire had burned. While he had been pottering in and out, content to know what dividends his manufacturing shares were earning, he had been practically deaf to the lingo, as he called it, concerning the new enterprises seething around him. The siren voice of speculation had whispered in his ear from time to time. but he had not listened. Why should a man of his means and standing take unnecessary risks of which he understood nothing? What his son Chauncey would have described as "straight tips" had been given to him more than once by Horatio Langdon himself, who had even assured him that he was neglecting a great opportunity, but he had shaken his head. Mr. Chippendale had in some respects the memory of an elephant; he kept stored in his mind the names of prime ventures which had failed, though he might overlook those which had prospered marvellously. Consequently when he was twitted with such things as "Telephone," he could retaliate by naming certain railroads which had gone into the hands of receivers, and mines which had become mere holes in the ground.

He had been mentally blind also, to all intents and purposes, to the wonderful physical changes in the banking and brokerage business which had been taking place under his very nose. When he had first begun to drop in at Langdon & Company's, their offices were cramped, the facilities limited and on a small scale. Since then the firm had twice enlarged its quarters, and latterly had transplanted itself to the entire ground floor of a spacious modern building. Here an army of accountants, clerks and stenographers had replaced the single bookkeeper and two or three office assistants of former days. The constant squeak of electric bells competed—for everything savored of competition—with the noise of the ticker and the distant clicking of numerous type-writing machines. Langdon & Company was now a great hive of industry subdivided into departments, each with a competent head who received a liberal salary.

All these innovations had occurred during Mr. Chippendale's manhood. He had been sensible, of course, of the gradual changes, but their commercial significance had been lost upon him. While he was proud of the growth of his native city, he fondly recalled the low and dingy office buildings without elevators, and the more deliberate business methods. When he entered the offices of Langdon & Company, people who did not know him looked at him twice, for obviously he belonged to the old school. He was always scrupulously dressed, and, in spite of his out-of-date tall hat, he had the effect of a man both of breeding and of fashion. If the clerks smiled at one another occasionally behind his back because his orders were so insignificant, his courteous, ceremonious bearing ensured him the freedom of the banking-house, which was felt to be a gainer in respectability through his presence.

It was his habit not to leave without exchanging a few words with the head of the firm. On this particular morning, as General Langdon happened to be disengaged when he entered, he went directly to his desk. The banker, looking up, forestalled what he supposed was on his friend's tongue by saying, with the readiness of the duck which dives at the flash or the boxer who projects his forearm to ward off an anticipated blow:

"Good morning, Harrison. I suppose you've come to haul me over the coals because I advised you to sell your Warrior Mills. All I can add is that I let mine go at the same time and at a slightly lower figure." Some brokers endeavor to lead away the conversation from painful topics by brisk pleasantries, others rush in and hypnotize the victim by virtuous or pathetic justification.

"I know," said Mr. Chippendale gently. "I don't blame you, Horatio. Chauncey explained to me that every one supposed the mills were completely run down. It seems to have been—er—the fortune of war."

"Ah, Chauncey explained it, did he? They were completely run down. Exactly that—the fortune of war. For it didn't occur to any of us that it would be possible to raise the necessary capital to build them over again. An extraordinary individual that man Blaisdell. Have you met him?"

Mr. Chippendale shook his head. He may have frowned slightly, though he did not intend to, for General Langdon added:

"Not exactly our kind, Harrison, but a new and interesting type."

"Chauncey has told me something about him."

"Chauncey thinks him extraordinarily able. By the way, speaking of Chauncey, he is doing better even than

I believed he would. I will tell you in confidence that we shall raise his salary again the first of January."

Mr. Chippendale bowed and his lip quivered.

"Yes," continued the banker, "he is justifying the opinion which I formed the first day I set eyes on him. 'That young man,' I said to myself, 'has grit and sterling principle—of course he has, for he's a Chippendale. There's nothing like thoroughbred stock, is there, whether it be in horses or men? I tell you, Harrison"—leaning forward, he tapped Mr. Chippendale's knee as he spoke—"you've got a devilish manly, capable son—a son to be proud of. Now shut up and forget all about Warrior Mills."

At this moment the telephone bell rang. Picking up the receiver from his desk, General Langdon became immersed in conversation. The telephone was still a comparatively new appliance. As a man of progress, Mr. Chippendale had recently yielded to the entreaties of his family and put one into his house. But in doing so he had acted contrary to what he called his better judgment. Was not the telephone an abettor of slovenly living in that its use encouraged the young to put off everything to the last minute? He knew that his sister Georgiana and his brother Baxter accused him of moral cowardice for having given in. Commercially speaking he could perceive that it was a great time-saver; yet would it not be distasteful to be obliged to think so quickly on the spur of the moment? Such was his reflection as he heard the sprightly replies of the banker to the person at the other end of the line. Then he delicately tried to think of other things in order not to listen. His position, though forced on him, was too much like eavesdropping or looking at a man in his bath. He recalled with a glow of satisfaction what he had just heard

concerning his son. He remembered also that his wife, a few weeks before, had let fall the remark that Chauncey seemed to be attracted by General Langdon's second daughter. But, in spite of this effort to close his ears to what was being said, he found it so difficult not to overhear that he was on the point of moving away, when the conversation ceased.

"That was the man of whom we were just speaking—Blaisdell." General Langdon hesitated a moment, then, thrusting his hands into his pockets and leaning back in his chair, he shot this remark at his visitor: "Would you like to gamble?"

Mr. Chippendale's first emotion at hearing the name of Blaisdell was one of wonder at the latter's free and easy conduct in having called up on the telephone the head of the banking-house of Langdon & Company merely because he wished to talk to him. Before he could bring himself to answer the rather startling inquiry, the banker did it for him.

"I know you never do. And this time you might lose every dollar you put in. On the other hand, there may be big money in it. Blaisdell"—and here he dwelt on the name for an instant like one citing an oracle—"is sure there is. He thinks that it is likely to prove one of the great commercial successes of the age." The banker's mouth visibly watered as he repeated the prediction.

"Is it Electric Coke?"

General Langdon started with surprise. "How the dickens did you ever hear of Electric Coke? I didn't suppose Chauncey——"

"It wasn't from Chauncey." Mr. Chippendale felt that he could not give his authority. He did not wish to betray that his sister was speculating at the instance of Blaisdell.

It was pleasant, nevertheless, for once to show himself alive to what was going on financially, however little he might be tempted by the lure.

"Was it from Avery?"

"I haven't seen Avery since we were in the army. I doubt if I should know him. He never attends the reunions."

"He hasn't been able to afford it, poor chap. He has had to practise strict economy, for his experiments have swallowed up every dollar he could lay his fingers on and more, too. I've helped him a little—loaned him money on his future patents—money I never expected to see again. Now he has got his patents and organized a company—or rather, Blaisdell, who married his step-daughter, has. How did you happen to know they were connected?" he asked, noticing the other's nod of acquiescence.

A plausible explanation, which he hastened to avail himself of, occurred to Mr. Chippendale. "My nephew Henry Sumner, used to know one of the daughters—Mr. Avery's own daughter, I believe."

"I see—I see. Queer lad, that Henry Sumner. A little shy, isn't he? A trifle cranky, too, perhaps. But he'll work out of that presently, I dare say. His father was a brave man."

"Henry is his father's son," replied Mr. Chippendale, wishing to stand up for his kinsman and yet state nothing inconsistent with his own mental reservation. "But excepting the daughter, the families are not otherwise acquainted." Having made this point clear, he saw no reason for divulging that Miss Avery was his sister's companion.

General Langdon, surmising that the Averys were indirectly the source of Mr. Chippendale's knowledge of Elec-

tric Coke, did not probe further but said: "We're placing the invention on the market—this house and Blaisdell's—and from the point of view of a speculation, it looks to me pretty attractive. There are to be underlying bonds and a single kind of stock. The subscriber to every block will get $10,000 bonds at 95 and a bonus of 100 shares of stock. I don't guarantee, Harrison, that it's the chance of a lifetime, but you can see for yourself that if we succeed commercially in manufacturing electricity out of coal, the profits may be fabulous. Now it's up to you to say whether you'll come in or stay out. You're just in time, for the subscription list opens to-morrow." General Langdon sat back again in his chair, conscious that he had made an irreproachably candid statement. If the venture proved a failure, it could not be claimed that he had minimized the risks. In case it turned out a gigantic success, his friend would not be able to say that he had appeared lukewarm.

"Manufacturing electricity out of coal." Mr. Chippendale, having finally ascertained what Electric Coke signified, repeated the words by way of meditating on them.

"Yes, from ordinary, every-day coal. Sounds a little like extracting gold from sea-water, doesn't it? If it'll make you feel any better, I'll confide in you that the thing is virtually underwritten already. "Blaisdell," he added, "is simply crazy over it, though he always supposed, as I did, that his father-in-law's invention would never produce anything more practical than moonshine."

Mr. Chippendale shook his head and rose. "I've no doubt Electric Coke will be a great success. I hope so, Horatio, for your sake." Then, in response to his friend's look of disappointment, he said simply, "I should have to borrow the money in order to go in."

"We should be glad to carry the subscription as long as you like. Give us a few bonds as a margin and we will always arrange the rest."

"But if Electric Coke went down instead of up——"

"You would have to pay up, of course. We shall peg the price for a year, anyway." Such lack of business knowledge made the banker feel a little impatient.

Mr. Chippendale's hypothesis was a statement of possibilities, not a symptom of doubt. He shook his head and put out his neatly gloved hand. "Thank you very much, Horatio. I'm old-fashioned in my ideas; moreover, I know nothing about syndicates." Then as his glance rested on a familiar figure absorbed in the perusal of the current quotations in the outer office, he pointed with his cane and said, with a twinkle in his eyes:

"There's your man."

"Baxter?" The banker's tone was one of amusement, and yet of horror, as if by the mere suggestion an idol had been desecrated. "If I were to ask him, he would be liable to fall down in a fit. He isn't progressive like you, Harrison. Everything he saves he salts down into gilt-edged securities. Baxter must be a very rich man by this time," he added contemplatively, "and if he lasts another ten years, as he bids fair to, he will be one of the richest men in Boston. The secret of which is plain as the nose on your face—he doesn't spend anything from one year's end to the other."

"While I am spending all the time. The moral is that a progressive man who desires to grow rich must run speculative risks."

General Langdon did not dispute this morbid philosophy. On the contrary, he accepted the challenge. "He must take certain chances. That's right. In other words,

when a good thing is shoved under his nose, he must make the most of it." He was inclined to be provoked. Principles were all very well. He respected Mr. Chippendale for his. But it must have been apparent that he desired to befriend him. Had he not done everything except get down on his bended knees and offer to guarantee the proposition? This would not have been business; besides, it would have been insulting. He had suspicions that his friend's finances were troubling him a little, and this had seemed the opportunity to do him a good turn—to do more than wipe out the depreciation on Warrior Mills. To be sure, there was an element of risk—but, as he had just intimated, unless a man took an occasional chance in this world of competition, he could not expect to lay up anything. He, too, had gathered, not without satisfaction, that Chauncey and his second daughter were intimate. The family connection was eminently safe and was unexceptionable. His remarks in regard to Chauncey's uncle led him to reflect that, though the young man's patrimony would be slender, he would presumably inherit from other sources. But, cognizant as he believed himself to be of Mr. Chippendale's attitude and affairs in general, the banker was not prepared for the response which his mild protest evoked.

"That reminds me—you don't happen to know of any one who would like to buy my house?"

"Your house? On the North Shore?"

"No—on Commonwealth Avenue."

"Your new house?"

"It isn't so very new; I've been there ten years, and—er—it has increased considerably in value. In a short time now I shan't require so large a house." Mr. Chippendale, metaphorically speaking, was whistling to keep

up his courage. He evidently hoped that the reason he alleged would prove convincing.

But General Langdon showed his incredulity by a snort. While putting these questions he had looked searchingly at his friend. Intimate as they were, he now recognized that they were on delicate ground and that what had been uttered so casually was the confession of a proud and sensitive nature in the clutch of circumstances. But, being an impulsive man, he followed his ordinary method of investigation.

"What put that damn-fool notion into your head?" In the next breath he inquired solicitously, "What's the matter, Harrison? Have you lost money which I don't know about?"

Mr. Chippendale stood buttoning his glove with one hand and holding his tall hat in the other. He was one of the few frequenters of the office who, when he sat down to talk with a member of the firm, did not regard the removal of his hat as a superfluous courtesy. He would have preferred to leave without explaining, for the confession had slipped out almost against his will.

"Not directly," he answered. "The things I inherited have shrunk in value somewhat." He hesitated a moment. "No, the trouble is it costs so much to live. I am spending more than my income, and—and the deficit isn't temporary; it gets larger every time I draw a trial balance. My expenses are eating me up. That in a Boston man is the next thing to dishonesty, you know."

"I'm not sure that it isn't worse, my dear fellow," General Langdon could not resist remarking. He was glad that the dialogue had taken a semi-humorous turn, which relieved the awkwardness of the situation. But he realized that the witticism was virtually true. His sympathies had

been deeply stirred by what he had just heard. How did people manage to live nowadays on what used to be a comfortable income, unless they had proper facilities for increasing it? He was exceedingly sorry for his friend. But what was there to do? He would gladly loan him a round sum; but such an offer, if not an impertinence, would certainly be refused. He knew the temper of Mr. Chippendale's spirit. The latter must be aware how his affairs really stood and, if it were true that he was falling appreciably behind year after year—as seemed extremely probable now that it had been mentioned—what better could he do than realize on his house, which could be sold at a profit, mortifying as this might be? General Langdon reflected that if it had been his own case, he might have preferred a large mortgage and to trust to luck for the future. But on the other hand, as had just appeared, Mr. Chippendale never did trust to luck. For such a man as this what could the future do?

As these considerations filtered through his mind, General Langdon put out his hand, for Mr. Chippendale had buttoned his overcoat and under cover of the smile which his last remark had brought to his lips, was turning to go. General Langdon knew that anything which savored of emotion would be distasteful to his visitor. But he was determined at least to express his sympathy by a strong hand-clasp. Yet all he said was:

"You know best, of course. I'm concerned to hear it—much concerned."

"It's precautionary in a sense—but—er—under all the circumstances unavoidable."

"I'll bear your house in mind. If I hear of any person who is looking for one, I'll recommend it. Real estate is rather a drug on the market just at the moment, but the

right man may come along." The banker appeared to be running over in his head the possible purchasers.

Mr. Chippendale, as he walked away, felt a sense of relief that Blaisdell's name had not been suggested. He had half expected that it would pop out of General Langdon's mouth the moment after he had admitted that his house was in the market. Though the possibility of selling it to him loomed up as a dire necessity, he hoped that it might be any one else. He was not sorry that he had spoken, but he felt the pangs of mortification. He knew that the item would be whispered from one to another until by the end of forty-eight hours it would become the talk of the Back Bay, and all his acquaintance would be exclaiming, "Have you heard the news? Harrison Chippendale's Commonwealth Avenue house is for sale."

As he passed through the office, he encountered his brother Baxter, who looked up from the figures he was studying in order to remark:

"Didn't I advise you not to sell your Warrior Mills?"

As has been intimated, Baxter Chippendale favored his mother's family in appearance. He was rather chunky, with reddish side-whiskers. His blue eyes were small and imperturbable, his heavy face decidedly impassive; but he never hesitated to speak his mind, especially to his relations, and his speech, like his sister Georgiana's, was liable to be tart. He and Harrison were on familiar terms, but, as they had never agreed on any subject since reaching manhood, it could not be said that they were sympathetic. Baxter was a confirmed old bachelor, set both in his ideas and in his habits. Though he did not serve in the Civil War, its memories rendered him what Harrison termed a hidebound partisan, and he was utterly intolerant of his brother's Mugwump propensities. They belonged to

different clubs, and also to different churches, for Harrison's wife and daughters had persuaded him to follow fashion and attend Trinity, although the Chippendales as well as the Floyds and Baxters had been Unitarians for two generations. Baxter still lived under the shadow of the State House, still occupied the high, box-like family pew at King's Chapel, still made liberal contributions to the Republican campaign fund, and still added a certain portion of his income to his principal as he had done for the past thirty years. In his eyes, Harrison's propensity to live beyond his means was merely the logical result of such radical steps as moving to the Back Bay, frequenting the Episcopal Church and coquetting with the former advocates of negro slavery. These were all moral lapses in his estimation, and as such to be frowned at by those who wished to foster conservative traditions. He was a director of several banks, institutions for savings and established railroads, a trustee of Mt. Auburn Cemetery and of the State Hospital, and had at one time been a member of the Governor's military staff. In early middle life, he had owned a fast horse or two, which, in sleighing time, he had pitted against other trotters on the Brighton road, and he had been active in the local militia; but now he led a retired existence, the boundaries of which were State Street, his box in the Safety Deposit vaults, his club and his pew at King's Chapel.

"You did, Baxter. It was a mistake from the point of view of what we know now. But as a family man, I didn't dare to take the risk." Mr. Chippendale, though crestfallen, was no craven. He was willing to admit the superiority of his brother's judgment in this particular case, but not to eat humble-pie.

"Never sell anything; it's always a mistake."

After this sweeping assertion, Baxter abruptly resumed the perusal of the figures he was examining, and Harrison proceeded on his way. The speech was one of his brother's favorite maxims. He had heard him utter words to the same effect many times before. But somehow this morning the trenchant remark seemed a little like the blow of a club, following as it did so closely on Chauncey's after-breakfast aphorism as to the fate of the man who was not a "bull" on this country. As he walked up State Street, Mr. Chippendale found himself suddenly repeating with a chastened spirit the lines "Unto him who hath shall be given and he shall have abundance; but from him who hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." The next moment he almost ran into Henry Sumner's arms, or rather, his nephew, who was hurrying along in the opposite direction, just missed running into him. Henry, as he recognized his uncle, beamed with satisfaction, but instantly cried with a gasp of excitement—

"Uncle Harrison, have you heard the news? They propose to take a slice off the Common."

In the scarcely appreciable interval before Henry's appalling statement drove every other consideration from his head, Mr. Chippendale was conscious for the first time in his life of something very like fellow-feeling for his nephew. His philosophic mind caused him to ask himself if they were not both more or less the victims of an age which was indifferent to ideals. In the next instant, however, he inquired:

"Who do?"

"The people who demand a subway for the electric cars. I've seen the plan. It appropriates the sidewalks along the Common, on Tremont and Boylston Streets, on the pretence of widening the street."

"But it would kill the trees—those superb trees."

"Certainly; and it would desecrate the old cemetery where people's ancestors are buried. The subway will plough right through the time-honored tombs."

"This must be stopped!"

"That's why I was on the way to your office, Uncle Harrison."

"It's an entering wedge in a scheme to parcel out the Common. We must not yield one square inch of the Common." Mr. Chippendale brought down the ferrule of his cane so firmly that the threshold rang. "They demolished one historic landmark—the Hancock house—on the plea of progress, and the community has been sorry ever since. We must get up a petition, Henry. Every one will wish to sign it."

"I've started one already. I've got several names, and I want you to head it." Henry produced a paper from his pocket which he held out to his uncle.

"I'll go back to the office with you."

"There's no need of that; it will only waste time. I'm devoting the day to getting names. Step in and sign it here," he said, indicating the office building in front of which they were standing. As he spoke, he whipped out a fountain-pen from his waistcoat pocket.

Mr. Chippendale looked suspiciously at the contrivance. "Do you use one of those things?" he inquired. Nevertheless he consented to step into the corridor and to compromise his dignity so far as to write his name, while his nephew held the paper against the marble wall. He expected every moment that the pen would leak, but it did not, so he contented himself with remarking:

"That's not one of my best signatures."

"But it will help a lot," exclaimed Henry eagerly, as he

folded up the document and thrust it into his pocket. "Progress," he continued, as they walked to the door, "it's the same plea this time—the progress of the city. That's what Miss Avery asked me to consider. As if sentiment and ancient landmarks had no claims against the march of material progress—the spread of encroaching bricks and mortar." His words had the effect of a pent-up outburst, and were, indeed, the overflow of a volcanic soul racked by the throes of contradiction.

"Miss Avery?" inquired his uncle, who, not unnaturally, was puzzled. "Your Aunt Georgiana will help us, of course. She was a tower of strength when we saved the Old South Meeting-house. Let me see, that must have been nearly fifteen years ago."

"I called there, on my way, but she wasn't at home. I saw Miss Avery, though, and she takes the other side. It appears that she has been talking with Mr. Blaisdell."

Mr. Chippendale stopped short. "That man seems to have a finger in every pie," he said dejectedly.

"He's one of the promoters of the subway, Uncle Harrison. Naturally she sides with him, for he is her brother-in-law, and he has the gift, if he chooses, of making black appear white. But Miss Avery takes pride in thinking for herself. If it's true that all they really intend is to widen the street to the extent of the sidewalk, without encroaching on the surface of the Common, and that the tombs will be protected——"

"Sacrilege," interjected his uncle. "And the trees—the trees. A tunnel underground will inevitably kill those beautiful elms; it will mutilate their roots."

"That's enough in itself to make one's blood boil," I agree. "I'm merely trying to be reasonable—endeavor-

ing to see the other side of the question. You remember, Uncle Harrison, it was you who warned me once against being impractical—tilting at trifles instead of saving my energies for the big things of life."

Mr. Chippendale stared at his nephew in amazement. "This is one of the big things of life; it's a matter of—er—principle."

"I'm glad to hear you say so, Uncle Harrison, for that's what it seems to me. And yet—" He paused, then said laughingly, "I'm well aware that the family thinks I'm visionary—almost a crank. Chauncey once told me as much. Well, I suppose I do get worked up over things, and probably always shall—you see I'm not apologizing exactly for my shortcomings, but in this age of the world, a man can't afford to be a mere obstructionist unless he's sure he is right. And I suppose there is such a thing as being too sure you're sure."

Henry regarded his uncle wistfully. He still wore his round felt hat, and his face had not lost its hungry look; but its expression was less delicate and his eyes, though luminous with his interest in the crusade which he was conducting, evidently invited a word of caution from what was to them a highly conservative tribunal. But the appeal was made in relation to the wrong subject; and, whereas Mr. Chippendale would, on a less absorbing occasion, have noticed with satisfaction this new note in his nephew's development, he feared for a moment that Henry was showing a lack of moral courage on the one, of all others, when a Chippendale ought to stand firm. Like the discerning man he was, he put two and two together and jumped to the conclusion that his nephew was again in the toils of his sister's companion. Not for a minute that he blamed Miss Avery; it was simply Henry's obsti-

nate infatuation. But the opportunity was not ripe to put this into words. Instead he said:

"When the issue is one which concerns the landmarks of the city, the men and women of our blood are not accustomed to hesitate or listen to specious argument. Your father would have been the first——"

Mr. Chippendale knew that this shibboleth would serve as a veritable trumpet-call. Before he could finish, his nephew was shaking his hand and saying, so emotionally that he felt embarrassed, for he abhorred scenes anywhere, and most of all in the street:

"He would have been the first; he would have been the first. I agree with you, I agree with you, Uncle Harrison. I simply wished to be absolutely sure that I was not carried away by my feelings. After I get a few more names I'm going straight to the Sphinx Club to stir up Morgan Drake and the other fellows. We'll educate public sentiment."

Henry's face was aglow, and, in spite of his own embarrassment, Mr. Chippendale's heart warmed toward him. He might be in love, but was he not a true Chippendale when it came to the scratch? As he thus reflected, he suddenly saw a queer change come over his nephew's expression as the result of bowing to some one who was passing. In another moment he heard him whisper:

"Talk of the devil! Did you notice who that was?"

Mr. Chippendale gazed at the back of the receding figure, which was that of a man of sturdy build and energetic tread, and shook his head.

"Hugh McD. Blaisdell—the villain in our piece—the man we were just speaking of."

Mr. Chippendale instinctively stiffened; nevertheless, he strained his eyes.

"I do not know him by sight," he said indifferently, though secretly he regretted that the opportunity to satisfy his curiosity was lost.

"People say he's the most enterprising man of his years in Boston."

"So I have been given to understand." Mr. Chippendale frowned. Had even the uncompromising Henry fallen a victim to the spell?

"His very bow is contagious. I might have been his nearest friend. That's an art in itself. My destiny seems to be to tread on people's feet, and often the feet of those I like best," and again Henry laughed wistfully.

Mr. Chippendale, though he realized that his nephew was metaphorical, evidently believed him capable of the physical act, for he immediately altered his position. But he felt that the moment had come to speak plainly and protest against the general infatuation.

"As I have just told you, Henry, I do not know the individual who has just passed, by sight. I admit he is highly progressive—which, within proper limits, is a virtue—but from what I have heard and read of him, he is not the sort of man I admire—the sort of man whose standards I would have you and Chauncey imitate. Some people might call that a prejudice"—Mr. Chippendale could always be his own critic. "It may be I am old-fashioned. But that is my opinion." He augustly blew his nose with his silk pocket-handkerchief. "Mark my words, a man of this stamp, if not watched, is liable in time to undermine the whole social structure of Boston."

There was a sympathetic gleam in Henry's eyes as he listened to this anathema. "Then we will watch him; watch him and fight him, if necessary, just as we are going to fight him on this subway business." He put out his

hand again. "I agree with you entirely, Uncle Harrison. That's exactly the idea I have of him—and I scarcely know him. We seem to agree on everything to-day, don't we?"

Having indulged in this exuberant outburst, Henry darted away, leaving Mr. Chippendale, though gratified at the moral support accorded him, to reflect that his nephew was certainly a queer stick and a greater enigma than ever. He was especially perplexed by his concluding remark, which seemed to him Delphic, and to suggest that there had been previous differences of opinion between them. Having mulled over this for a few moments, he sighed and, like the knowing man he was, decided that it was only the random utterance of a nervous youth persisting in a foolish attachment and not a sign of sly, diabolic disrespect.

CHAPTER XI

BLAISDELL, at the time he passed Mr. Chippendale and Henry Sumner on State Street, was on his way to General Langdon's office in order to confabulate further in regard to Electric Coke. On the afternoon of Christmas Eve—which was about three months subsequent to this—he closed his desk and started for his suburban home a little earlier than usual. He was making lordly gifts to the members of his family circle this year, to which he had already attended; but, after presenting each of his clerks with double the sum which they had ever received from him at this season, he now gratified his bounding impulse toward generosity by various spasmodic acts of bounty on his way to the station. He pressed a five-dollar gold-piece into the palm of a bewildered apple-woman at the corner,

and gave three times that amount to a pedler who had lost one leg and was offering shoe-laces for sale. He bought from several newsboys their entire stock of newspapers and dismissed them radiant, bidding them keep their wares, instead of thrusting them down the nearest sewer as a more subtle public benefactor might have done.

But Blaisdell had no inclination toward subtlety. So far as he recognized the meaning of the quality, he looked askance at it. Did not indulgence therein detract from heartiness? But no such sophistries disturbed his present mood. On the contrary, he was solely bent on action as an outlet to the beneficent feelings occasioned by the fact that to-morrow was Christmas, and the subconscious knowledge that he was in excellent health and had had a wonderfully prosperous year. He was pleasantly aware that though he was not so sprucely dressed as many another, he could even now buy out almost any one of those he met as he had just bought out the newsboys; and as for the future, it disclosed golden visions. He was in a minor sense a capitalist in disguise, and he enjoyed the ecstasy of the secret knowledge. People knew, of course, that he had done well—that his eggs had hatched—but they were in the dark as to the size of even the bird in hand, his immediate prosperity, and he would choose his own methods of enlightening them. The agreeable reflection caused him, metaphorically speaking, to hug himself, and when he reached the railroad station he promptly purchased every Christmas picture-paper in sight and bade the attendant at the counter keep the change. As he walked down the platform with a big roll of magazines sticking out of either pocket of his fur-trimmed overcoat, and carrying several parcels, he was not altogether surprised when some one at his elbow accosted him with—

"Hullo! Santa Claus." At least, it struck him as a not inappropriate comparison, for, to tell the truth, he felt decidedly like his conception of that genial patron-saint, in that he was aglow with good will toward all the world and was able to manifest it practically. Turning to ascertain who the discerning friend might be, he discovered that it was Morgan Drake.

"Hullo, Drake. Merry Christmas! Come out and take dinner with us."

"I'm dining with some fellows at the Sphinx Club. It's fortunate, for otherwise I should have accepted your invitation, and your wife wouldn't want me. She will be busy with the children's stockings. It takes a bachelor to point out that."

Blaisdell realized that Morgan was correct in his deduction that his room would be better than his company on this particular evening, but the remark struck him as exactly in keeping with the writer's habitual point of view, which he considered to be on the verge of saturnine. Were not the quips which were so invariably on the tip of his pen as well as his tongue the reason why his books did not sell better?

"Nonsense, we'd dress you up and pretend you were Santy and the children would be delighted. We're going to have a Christmas tree, and the Averys will be there. By the way, old chap, we're sending out as Christmas cards several copies of your new volume of essays. Lora was tickled to death at receiving an autograph copy from the author." Although he had not finished, Blaisdell, to whom his companion did not look very prosperous, paused to regret that it had not occurred to him to buy out secretly two or three editions of the volume in question. He promised himself to do something of the sort another year,

Then he felt impelled to complete his line of thought by saying, "I don't know much about the literary market, but I should suppose the secret of success there, just as everywhere else, would be to give people the things they want at the time they want them. Why don't you bring out next year a rattling Christmas story with plenty of action and a lot of sentiment? Take my word for it, just the right thing, illustrated by a leading artist and attractively printed—details like that count nowadays—would sell like hot cakes. I'll agree to take a thousand copies for the firm as a starter, to send out to our customers with the compliments of the season."

"Something to match the plum-pudding and the mince-pies and the mistletoe, along the lines of grandmother's receipt. I can see that there might be a gold-mine in it. But I'm afraid it's not in me, Blaisdell," said Morgan with a laugh.

"Confound the fellow; there goes his tongue in his cheek again!" reflected Blaisdell. He had reached the car he intended to take and paused with his hand on the rail. "It's in you provided you don't start with the assumption that this isn't a pretty good world. One trouble with you literary fellows is that you are apt to forget that a man who comes home tired at night from his day's work needs to be uplifted and encouraged, not let down and depressed."

Blaisdell's inward comment, if audibly expressed, would have suggested irritation, but his words, though obviously intended as friendly advice, were delivered with his characteristic affability and persuasiveness as if he yearned to set an erring brother straight by an indisputable summing up of the obstacles between him and success. It so happened that Morgan Drake, who was on his way out of town to

make an afternoon call on the girl of his heart—a Radcliffe college graduate—whom he desired to marry and could not because of his limited income, had come down to the station chanting to himself semi-lugubriously that plaint from 'Lycidas'—"Alas! what boots it with incessant care to ply the homely, slighted shepherd's trade?" The moving cause of this was an offer from a magazine editor to whom he had sent a short story, to make him respectable remuneration for two or three others of a quality indicated in the letter. These would interfere with his sustained work—which was to be the production of a poem, novel or play (ultimately all three) of pronounced and original merit, whereas the stories would be so handicapped by the conditions that they must unavoidably prove "pot-boilers." What answer should he send? While pondering this, he had caught sight of Blaisdell's figure ahead of him and observed his magnetic air of prosperity. This dumb show in itself was almost a mandate in the name of pure common-sense to subdue his caustic and unconventional style to the current requirements of magazine fiction. What Blaisdell said the moment after was so convincingly in point as to savor of pure genius. Morgan could not resist pointing this out.

"My last story was sent back with a text: the editor thought I had talent, but what they desired were 'love stories with a hopeful note.' Now your advice comes as a sort of Christmas supplement to his."

Blaisdell was never without suspicions as to what Morgan Drake was secretly thinking. But whatever sinister thought might be behind the frank admission of this coincidence, the statement in itself was a testimonial to his own sagacity which sent the Christmas spirit coursing again through his veins. Was not advice often the best present

one could give a friend at merry Yule-tide? He eagerly put this philosophy into words.

"I hit the nail on the head that time, didn't I? I shouldn't wonder if this Santa Claus"—and, now being comfortably seated, he tapped his fur-lined bosom—"had given you the most valuable present you'll find in your stocking, whatever the real old boy may bring you." Blaisdell's small eyes gleamed with humor, animated by the belief that this was the best of his Christmas Eve benefactions.

Indeed, so overpowering was this mood that Morgan Drake, unaccustomed as he was to refrain from paradox even when convinced, realized, as he left the train a few minutes later, not only that he had suffered this complacent assertion to go unchallenged, but that he was so far hypnotized that he had neglected to inquire whether the reports which he had recently heard concerning Mr. Avery's invention were true. He was still a lodger in the house on Dartmouth Street and he had been jubilantly informed by his landlady that the long-talked-of discovery was on the eve of becoming a commercial success under the name of Electric Coke. Morgan hoped that this might be true, but remembering the broker's previous scepticism concerning the invention, he would have liked to know his opinion.

It passed through Blaisdell's mind in the course of his beneficent glow to suggest to his companion to buy a few shares of Electric Coke, but he abstained because of the following reasoning. Morgan's available cash, if any, would pay only for a few shares—a mere bagatelle of profit in case they went up; and to explain to an impractical literary chap the process of being "carried" on a proper margin would be just like elucidating it to a woman, without the compensating advantages. The writer would in-

evitably fail to understand and have spasms of misgiving as to the consequences, if not irresolute scruples. No, the most satisfactory way to assist him would be to buy an edition or two of his next book at one fell swoop and let him imagine the public were the purchasers.

During the six years he had been down-town, yet chiefly as the result of his marriage, Blaisdell had also developed socially. He dressed better, and, strong as he still was in his democracy, people no longer all meant the same to him. He had not only ceased to take off his hat in an office-building elevator as a mark of elegant deportment when women entered it, but he had in a minor degree begun to understand and take an interest in the social structure of the community in which he had become prominent. Lora was mainly responsible for this, as will appear. Her sensitive and keen appreciation of what was going on in society had roused in him a new ambition, which, if still somewhat languid, was constantly stimulated by her happiness when he gratified it for her sake. If he showed himself less apt at digesting the information which his trig little wife poured into his ears than in other things, it was merely because their social progress under her leadership had been thus far so smooth. He had been content to anticipate her desires by a constant series of golden surprises, and to trust to her clever guidance. Yet, while he still professed to be amused by her chart-like knowledge of the various urban and suburban social sets, he had fallen more and more under the spell of an intention that his wife should have everything which money could provide. Wherever she wished to live she should live—"reside" was his actual word, just as they always "retired" at night—and, as a corollary thereto, she should belong to whatever set she preferred.

Consequently, as he was carried swiftly home in his gay new sleigh with its high, curving dashboard and its equipment of jingling bells, he glowed with the secret knowledge that the most princely of his Christmas benefactions was still in store for him. His present for Lora had always been some article of jewelry, that of each year being more splendid than the last, so that she had clapped her hands with fresh and increasing delight. In order to preserve the tradition, he had now in his pocket a handsome bracelet, which would also serve to make the surprise which he was about to spring upon her more complete.

Blaisdell had taken his mother-in-law into his confidence. It was she who, having listened for the sleigh-bells, met him at the door. He conveyed to her by a triumphant nod that a threatened hitch in the programme had been removed. Mrs. Avery reached out her hand for the package which he produced from his inner pocket, and indicated by dumb show that she wished to decorate it with red ribbon. Thereupon she stole away, while the beaming husband and father, who divined that his wife had been decoyed up-stairs so that the coast might be clear for the conspirators, announced his presence in the house by calling her name with resounding cheeriness.

Lora came running down-stairs at the sound of his voice and was at his heels as he was in the act of lifting his four-year-old daughter from the rug in the sitting-room.

"Mama thought she heard baby crying, and I felt sure I'd be back in time," she expostulated, reaching up her face to share his embraces.

"Forgiven, little woman, because it's Christmas Eve. Peace on earth and good will toward men—not excluding women—women who allow their toiling husbands——"

"Pooh! We don't mind him, do we, Dorothy darling?

Especially when he fails to notice that the daughter of his house has a lovely new dress on—a dress which would make other mothers green with jealousy."

Blaisdell held up his tiny offspring at arm's length. "White, with frills—that's all I see. It's lucky she has a father who is able to stand these wild extravagances. 'Perfectly lovely'—there, I've said it."

"You men are all alike. How's Electric Coke? Mama has been doing sums in imaginary profits at short intervals between tying up the presents."

"They are liable to be large enough in the end to give her softening of the brain," he answered good-humoredly. "No change to-day; everybody was getting ready to play Santa Claus. The market closed a little soft for most things, but Coke was firm at 81 bid, 82 asked. It's resting until after the New Year. A rise of twenty dollars in thirty days has taken away its breath for the time being. By next Christmas I expect to see it selling at 160."

Lora hugged the four-year-old Dorothy to her breast as if she were listening to the awe-inspiring prediction of a good fairy. "Why, you're making the child out an heiress, Hugh," she lisped.

"That dire fate is in store for her, Coke or no Coke."

"160! Why, wouldn't Mr. Avery be almost a millionaire?"

"Almost, when he owns outright one third of the stock? I consider your mother justified already in beginning to spend like the wife of a multimillionaire."

"Do you hear that, daughter? Your step-grandfather is likely to be a multimillionaire. And Priscilla, Hugh—if it proves true, I shall be gladdest of all on her account. She'll be sure then to make a brilliant match. At present she has no opportunity to meet anybody available."

"Who knows but the effect of being an heiress won't encourage her to remain single?" Blaisdell suggested as he warmed his back at the fire.

"But Priscilla has always intended to marry; she's a marrying girl. I'm positive of that."

"Think how restless she would be with an income of twenty-five thousand dollars a year. The freedom, as they call it, of the bachelor maid would attract her. She'd begin by going round the world alone or with some other single woman, and when she returned she'd try to found something—anything except a domestic hearth. Haven't you told me many a time that the Boston girl expects perfection in man and never finds it?"

Lora laughed. She had set Dorothy down among her toys on the rug and was making the tea. "I just wish Priscilla could hear you. That's exactly the kind of Boston girl she has always intended not to be. There are such, of course, who, as Morgan Drake once said, lack the caloric capacity to fall in love, and so congeal into old maids. But Priscilla despises women like that."

"Why doesn't she get married, then?"

"She will now. I don't see why you should begrudge the poor, dear thing a trip abroad."

"In the last five years, I mean."

"What chance has she had? Whom does she ever see except Henry Sumner? And she only sees him occasionally. I'm not certain even that he doesn't avoid her. I did think once upon a time," she continued pensively as she handed her husband his cup of tea, "that she might sooner or later learn to fancy him. But I've no reason to think they agree any better than they ever did." She shook her head mournfully. "Now, who else has there been?"

Blaisdell shrugged his broad shoulders. "Marrying girls get chances—all the plain ones even, and Priscilla is better-looking to-day than she ever was."

"I'm glad you admit that, Hugh." Lora smiled to herself and was silent for a few moments. "If I tell you something which I oughtn't to tell you, will you promise to forget it?" she asked mysteriously. "And never to speak of it to any one?"

"About Priscilla?"

"Promise first. Some women in my place would not dare to tell their husbands for fear of spoiling them. But I'm not afraid. Now don't try to guess, you clever man. Promise."

"You're dying to tell me, anyway. Well, I promise."

Lora looked round to make sure that no one could overhear. "It's merely this; I suppose Priscilla would have accepted you if you had asked her. Now, Hugh, if you ever breathe this to any one else, I shall never forgive you."

Blaisdell beamed with amusement. "That's a terrible secret to impart to a modest, domestic husband on Christmas Eve."

"I don't mean she ever said a word; and I dare say she never knew. But then you never asked her."

"You dear little logician! And what does that prove? For I can see it proves something."

Lora put her head on one side. "It explains lots of things. It proves, to begin with, that you're wrong in thinking she's not a marrying girl."

"You mean that she is waiting to marry me?"

Lora made a pretty face at him. "If you talk like that, I shall be sorry I told you. Why weren't you more surprised? I expected that you would be tremendously surprised."

"I've something to confide, too." Blaisdell stretched his legs apart and looked down at her indulgently over his tea-cup. "I can't honestly pretend that I was completely in the dark that you were cutting her out."

"Oh, Hugh." Her mild protest was on Priscilla's behalf, but she did not try to conceal her happiness. They both laughed, and Blaisdell, bending forward to return his cup to the tray, cemented the mutual avowal by kissing the lips which she held out to him.

"Where is she, by the way?" he inquired.

"Miss Chippendale needed her. She and Mr. Avery are coming out just in time for dinner. Her father's success has been a positive shock to her. It has dazed her; she can't be tender enough to him. But even you didn't believe that his invention would ever amount to anything."

"See what I have brought for her," Blaisdell said, taking from the mantel-piece and undoing one of two small packages.

"A bracelet!" Lora clapped her hands. "How dear of you! It's perfectly lovely, Hugh. Your bark is always worse than your bite. I've half a mind," she said, as she fastened the clasp around her wrist and examined the braided pattern of *lapis lazuli* and gold, "to keep it myself. Bracelets are beginning to come in again."

"Take your choice, then," he answered, opening the other jeweller's box and displaying a second bracelet of somewhat similar workmanship but in malachite.

Lora looked from one to the other. "My Christmas present?" she ejaculated.

Blaisdell did not contradict her. He was delighted at the success of his ruse, and he believed that he knew exactly what was passing through her mind. Was she not

vainly trying to conceal her disappointment that his present was less magnificent than any which he had recently given her?

"Why didn't you save it for the tree?"

"Because you showed covetous designs on Priscilla's."

"I see. Then I must choose," she answered, and she examined the bracelets in silence for a few moments. "I'll take this," she said at last—and it was the *lapis lazuli* which she selected. "I think it's prettier, on the whole—but there's not much to choose." Then she suddenly inquired, without looking up, "Was it so difficult to choose which of us you would marry?"

Blaisdell could scarcely restrain his laughter. The jealousy which had evoked this taunt was plainly not of Priscilla as Priscilla, but of the fact that there was so much similarity between the gifts. Yet to tell her now would spoil all; he would persevere in his strategy even at the risk of allowing her to believe for an hour or so that he had been stingy. Would not the reaction which would come when she was undeceived convince her forever that there was no husband who wished to be more generous than he? He was even disposed to tease her a little; so he replied:

"I will admit that for the first few weeks after I became a boarder at your mother's house it was nip and tuck between you."

Lora looked into his eyes imploringly, as if even this were more than she could bear. Just then Mrs. Avery appeared at the door, carrying the one-year-old son and heir fresh and crowing from his afternoon nap. This broke the slight tension. In another moment Lora had realized again that she was the happiest woman in the world, and, by way of amends or to show how contented she was, she sat down at the piano while the others guarded the chil-

dren. She was apt to play or sing for Hugh at that hour; he said it rested him, and the children seemed diverted by the music.

The happiest woman in the world—one of them certainly. Poor Priscilla! Hugh was correct; it was high time for her to marry some one—time for the right person to turn up.

> "Then be not coy and hard to please
> But while ye may go marry,
> For having lost but once your prime
> You may forever tarry."

She was singing it laughingly by way of making up to Hugh for letting him see that she was miffed. Boston girls were prone to be hard to please. But what chance had Priscilla really had? However, even now she didn't understand why he had given them presents so much alike. The year before last hers had been a superb set of furs, and last Christmas a pearl necklace. At this point she bit her tongue and said that she ought to be ashamed of herself. If she were not careful, that which befell the woman in the old fairy tale, who imposed once too often on the bounty of the generous flounder, would happen to her. Some day Hugh would be justified in saying, with a stormy face, "That's the last straw. Go back to your pig-sty again." Lora laughed to herself at the analogy. Justified—but he never would. He loved her too much for that, even if he had economized on her Christmas present. Perhaps he was too busy; though this was not really an excuse. And after all, in the fairy tale there had been both a husband and a fish, and in her case the fish was her husband.

What did the greedy woman ask the fish which angered it so? Lora paused in her singing just long enough to remember that it was to make her husband lord of the sun

and moon and stars. An audacious request surely! Compared with that woman, her own desires had been exceedingly moderate. It was not as if she had importuned fortune to make her husband President of the United States. The fish had been generosity itself, of course, but they were still living in the suburbs. And were the suburbs, socially speaking, so very superior to a pig-sty? At least, it would seem as if a woman with superb furs and a real pearl necklace would be justified in requesting the fish to let her move to town; especially as Hugh had promised that they should as soon as he could afford it. Now that Electric Coke was going up so fast, was there not every reason to suppose that he could afford it?

Pleased with this conceit, Lora, as she strummed gaily, nodding from time to time at the group in front of the fire, surveyed critically her surroundings. It was a dear little house, but not imposing. She had remembered to be thrifty and yet had done her best to make it cosy, and she flattered herself that she had succeeded. There were shiny silk curtains, bright-colored cushions in abundance, potted plants and all the magazines; the florist had orders to send violets twice a week, and there was always a box of bonbons on the table—but her resources had come to an end. The parlor was like her mother's glorified, and there was little opportunity for entertaining. They knew a few of the neighbors, but the people she wished to know were those in town whose names and whose festivities she read of in the social gossip columns of the Sunday newspapers. Did all those women have necklaces of pearls? She doubted it, and she felt sure that no one had handsomer furs. She would like a large house with spacious drawing-rooms upholstered in the latest fashion—where, as soon as they were settled, she would give a large ball in honor of

Priscilla. "Mr. and Mrs. Hugh McDowell Blaisdell"—she would have the cards engraved—"request the pleasure of your company on Thursday evening, January 10th, to meet Miss Priscilla Avery." Yes, if ever they were going to move, the time seemed opportune; Hugh must certainly once more invoke the generosity of the fish.

"Flounder, flounder in the sea
Prithee, prithee come to me.
For my dear wife Lora (not dame Isabel)
Wants strange things I scarce dare tell."

And when the fish popped its head out of the water and inquired, "What will she have now?" answer boldly, "She would like a house on the sunny side of Commonwealth Avenue or the water side of Beacon Street." Surely—surely the fish could not fail to reply, "A very reasonable request, and she shall have it right away."

Lora ran her fingers along the keys in a gay final flourish and rose from the piano. Her figure was larger than five years before, but it had filled out symmetrically and was still trim. Even the ample outline of her stylish tea-gown was not too trying. She wore a bunch of violets at her waist—the perfume of violets was her specialty.

As she joined the others, she heard her mother, who, with the baby on her lap, was listening spell-bound to Hugh, exclaim, "It sounds like Monte Cristo." She recognized that they were still discussing the possibilities of the successful invention.

"Monte Cristo?" echoed Blaisdell. "How much do you suppose Monte Cristo was worth?"

"I had always supposed that he was fabulously rich—too rich to count," answered Mrs. Avery.

"I heard some men discussing that the other day—Gen-

eral Langdon, the broker, was one of them—and it was proved by computation that the wealth of the really big fellows of to-day, the half-dozen industrial kings—any one of them—makes Monte Cristo's look like thirty cents. It's difficult to realize the accumulations of the last twenty years in this country—in steel, in railroads, in sugar, in oil. A rich man of a generation ago is practically a poor man to-day. And it's on the cards, as I was saying, that Electric Coke may prove to be one of those fountains of wealth—one of those financial geysers which produce a genuine modern fortune. It's in its infancy at present, but every one of the big industries, the big inventions, the big mines which this country has produced has had its infancy. I'm not letting my imagination run riot because it's Christmas Eve, Mrs. Avery. No, I tell you I look to see your husband the proud possessor of a second-class fortune before the end of another five years. There are first-class fortunes and second-class fortunes just as there are first-class battle-ships and second-class battle-ships. Boston has more second-class fortunes than any city in the country, but it hasn't a first-class fortune. Perhaps it never will have." He spoke the last words reflectively, as if he were stating a philosophic truth—a condition of affairs which he deplored, but which he intended to do his best to alter.

Lora promptly showed that she fathomed his thought, for, dandling her precious daughter, she addressed her thus: "We know better, don't we, Dorothy? Some day Boston will have one."

Blaisdell caught the prophetic aside and smiled at his wife in amused appreciation of her quickness. But Mrs. Avery, who would at any other time have inquired why Boston was to be denied this privilege, was too much engrossed by the flattering prospect of possessing second-

class wealth to pay heed to anything but the personal equation.

"As rich as Monte Cristo?"

"Richer than Monte Cristo."

In spite of her son-in-law's disparagement, this assurance was plainly stupefying to Mrs. Avery. "To think of it—to think of it!" she said. "And the strangest part of it all is that Mr. Avery won't care—he doesn't care. The only change I have got him to consent to so far is to have cream—thick cream—with his porridge for breakfast. He would be content to go on living just as he is for the rest of his days. That's his New England conscience, as Priscilla says. But fortunately, for him, he has a wife."

"Who won't permit him to hide his light under a bushel. That's right," said Blaisdell.

"My first husband's ambition was to be President of the United States. But I'm not sure—not sure that I wouldn't rather be as rich as—er—Monte Cristo. I've always said, you know," she added, addressing her daughter, "that Hugh was likely some day or other to become President."

Lora smiled and nodded. "If he wouldn't rather be one of those industrial kings he spoke of—and make a first-class fortune."

They both turned to Blaisdell for a response. He had resumed his position with his legs apart at the mantelpiece. "Thanks, ladies, for the choice. Any free-born citizen can be President provided he gets the necessary votes. That's the privilege of every good American. But those other fellows"—he paused a moment, evidently fascinated by his idea, "don't they make the rest of us possible? Take the poets—William Shakespeare—the philosophers, college professors, lawyers and doctors—it's

been the fashion of the world to put them above the successful business man. Don't they owe their prosperity, if not their opportunity, to the fact that a few master minds over the world—and particularly to-day in this country—are making this and that commodity cheaper by gigantic combinations? Isn't the genius—for it is genius—which enables more men to get a decent living, the most useful kind of all? I repeat, don't they make the rest of us possible?"

The sound of sleigh-bells broke in upon Blaisdell's argument. Mr. Avery and Priscilla had arrived, so that the party which had gathered for the children's Christmas tree was now complete. Priscilla required a private interview in the hall in regard to certain parcels which she had brought with her; but the inventor, whose wife had taken on herself all responsibility for their gifts, was free to enter and offer his Christmas greetings. As Mrs. Avery had stated, he showed no outward signs of worldly prosperity. But Electric Coke was, nevertheless, on the tip of his tongue. He began eagerly to explain to Blaisdell the merits of an improvement almost perfected, which would simplify and increase the efficiency of his apparatus.

"We shall be able to cut the cost in two," he said, and his dreamy eyes kindled.

"Good. But we mustn't lose sight entirely of the stockholders when the time comes to cut. The great public benefited by such an improvement would not be entitled to the whole of the profit."

Mr. Avery looked a little disappointed. "Wouldn't it? I dare say not. I'm not a business man, Blaisdell, as I've told you frequently before." The personal satisfaction of success had already been forgotten in the purpose of perfecting his discovery. Such were the habits of a lifetime—

such were the ruts formed by his temperament—that he was already seeking new fields to conquer for the benefit of science.

This attitude struck Blaisdell as lacking in humanity; it was too frosty, too typical of that Puritan spirit which, in former generations, frowned sternly on all pleasures and now both was indifferent to modern comforts and had lost the capacity to enjoy. Yet it was his natural impulse to say the complimentary thing whatever his secret thoughts, unless he might hope, as in Morgan Drake's case, to point the better way; for he knew that Mr. Avery was beyond his help. "I don't know about that. You were sensible enough to hold on to one-third of the stock."

"Yes, I did that. It was only fair to the people who believed in me." Then seeing that Priscilla was standing at his side, he smiled on her and added: "And now apparently it will serve to keep the wolf from this young woman's door in case anything should happen to me." He spoke as if, on the whole, this was important, but chiefly as a concession to the modern point of view that it took more money to live than formerly. That his daughter was safeguarded from want was evidently a satisfaction to him; but what reason was there to think that he took any interest in the knowledge that she was an heiress?

"What an old fossil!" was Blaisdell's silent judgment. The malachite bracelet had been removed to be done up for the Christmas tree. He looked at Priscilla with the eye of an appraiser. His wife's confidence had reminded him afresh that as a boarder in his landlady's house he had deliberately chosen between the two. Her development was one of the things which interested him when they met, though he did not dwell on it at other times. As he noted the glow in her cheeks which the sleigh-ride had

heightened, he did not refrain from remarking, "There are wolves—and there are wolves. Will she be entirely secure from being gobbled up by one of the other variety?"

For an instant Mr. Avery did not comprehend. Then he nodded. "A fortune-hunter? Eh, Priscilla?" He appealed gaily to his daughter as if the pleasantry struck him as peculiarly happy, and added: "Behold, a new live peril, my dear."

"Oh yes, you're both right—I shall henceforth, like a true Boston girl, suspect that every one is trying to marry me for my money. And I shall just despise myself for it."

She spoke with whimsical despair, but looking unflinchingly from one to the other. It was clear to Blaisdell that she had reached this state of mind through fierce mental processes. But gloomy as her argument was, it was equally clear that the cup of life which she held up to the light contained not one drop of real murkiness and that her self-commiseration was virtually mock. Was she not bubbling over with vitality and almost radiant with content?

It suited Blaisdell so well to observe this that he said: "I can see, however, that you intend to make the best of your appalling hereditary discoveries."

The remark pleased her; it seemed like most of his utterances, discerning and to the point. "Oh, yes," she cried, "I have even weighed spinsterhood in the balance with domestic bliss alongside of—of Professor Paton, and beheld myself, without dismay, an irredeemable old maid."

"Do not make sport of an honest man's love, Priscilla," exclaimed her father. Even genius is liable at the spur of parental solicitude to have recourse to a prosy saw.

"On the contrary, father, I wish I could fall in love with

him; I do, indeed. Then he would feel justified in offering himself to me, which he never has in all these years. He wishes to be sure first—and I am sure. He is painfully persevering, but sagely silent. So there we are—victims of destiny. And I'm nearly twenty-five. I mentioned him merely to illustrate my plight—my infirmity. No, dear father," she cried with sudden gaiety, as though she were rejoicing in her predicament instead of deploring it, "I intend to try and make up to you for having been a thorn in your side all these years. I'm prepared to accept gracefully the lot which fate evidently has in store for me."

She threw her arm round her father's shoulder as she spoke, and touched her cheek to his. The greatest surprise of her life had been her father's vindication—the discovery that he was right and she utterly wrong; and the first results of the chastening which her spirit had received from the success of Electric Coke had been a wave of tenderness. She had been eager to abase herself; and yet she had soon recovered sufficiently from the shock of self-reproof to become susceptible to the new dread lest, like most inventors, he should throw away the legitimate fruits of his years of patient research. He had been on her mind at the time of the formation of the company, and she had been impelled for his protection to confide her fears guardedly to Lora's husband. She had been informed after the meeting, to her intense relief—indeed, her father had told her of his own accord—that he remained a large stockholder. Not that she cared for the money—so she argued to herself—but it would have mortified her deeply had he been allowed to ignore the practical side of the transaction. Her filial perversity threw the credit of this escape chiefly on Blaisdell. She could not help believing that but for him her father might through indifference or cajolement

have parted with all his interest in the patents for the lure of a pitiful sum in ready cash which would ensure him modest comfort for the rest of his days. Instead, there was a prospect of his being the possessor of millions. One-third of the capital stock! She had not known the exact amount until she overheard it a few minutes before; and her heart warmed again toward the man whom she considered responsible for this fortunate condition of affairs. The right person had never yet presented himself, but it was something to feel that her step-brother-in-law was winning new laurels every day.

"You mean," said Blaisdell, "that you are leaving Miss Chippendale—are coming home to live?"

It was Mrs. Avery who, entering the room with Lora to announce that the candles on the tree were all lighted, answered the inquiry. "Yes, her highness has graciously consented to accept board and lodging from Monte Cristo while she's deciding what she will do next. She feels at last that the bread and butter she consumes will not be too severe a drain upon our resources.".

All laughed at the appellation which she thus fastened on her husband, and Priscilla in her delight could not forbear to exclaim: "Monte Cristo! It's perfect. I shall never call you by any other term of endearment, father. Now it's no use for you to assure us that there were never two people in the world more unlike than you and he."

"On the contrary," said Blaisdell, "the comparison fits you like a glove, Mr. Avery—like the paper on the wall." Then turning from the somewhat startled inventor, he accosted Priscilla with "But you haven't told us what you are going to do next."

"The tree is ready and Lora is waiting with the children," interposed Mrs. Avery, with an air of bustle. But

she added authoritatively: "She ought to go to Europe to begin with, and make a completely fresh start. By the time she gets back with lots of Paris clothes, our new house will be ready." This last assertion was evidently intended as a matrimonial feeler, for she glanced in her husband's direction and then smiled meaningly at her son-in-law.

"It's a terrible responsibility to have money." The words slipped out so involuntarily that Priscilla hastened to declare: "There, I've said it. Who else but a Boston girl would be capable of such a speech just after she had discovered that her father was a second Monte Cristo? You see, I'm incorrigible, struggle as I will. It's the hereditary poison working in my blood." She paused a moment in her gay yet rueful speech, then flashed an appealing glance at Blaisdell. "I do wish to go to Europe and—and to buy things, but though I'm coming home to live I'm not ready to abandon Miss Georgiana just yet—to drop all the matters we are interested in. On my own account, I mean. I'm just beginning to believe that I'm of a little use in the things which are actually going on right here in Boston—the practical things. That is, I'm anxious they should be practical. You ought to sympathize with me in that, Hugh, and—and stand up for me. For instance, Miss Georgiana, as you know, is still fearfully agitated about the Common. She is anxious to spend large sums of money to save the Common. I am trying to convince her that this is one of the cases where sentimental considerations should not be allowed to block great public improvements, and that a few old tombs and an occasional tree are nothing compared with enabling busy citizens to be carried quickly to and from their offices —almost your very words, you may remember. I'm serving just at present as a sort of buffer—a counter-irritant to

Henry Sumner—and now that I have money and can act independently," she continued, putting her arm through Blaisdell's as they followed the others, "I'm inspired to organize—(it's always organize; you see, I'm becoming in that respect as bad as the rest)—a rival coterie, even if it is another old maids' movement. We'll call ourselves the apostles of common-sense, and you shall come and make us an address on the duties of the progressive citizen. Our motto shall be, 'Don't kick against every new thing.' I shouldn't be a true Bostonian if I didn't try to start some movement; but this will be different from the others, even if I have to be the only member. So that's why I don't wish to go abroad at present."

"I'm the last person to wish you to go abroad. I like too well to have you here," said Blaisdell. "I like to have you to look at and—and when you're at home I can buy you a Christmas present," he added, though it did not convey his real thought, which was that he was in no hurry to have her belong to some one else. As she pressed close to his side in her enthusiasm, he reflected semi-humorously that were he a Mormon he would propose to her on the spot and that there was something to be said in behalf of judicious polygamy. Might not a man become deeply attached to two totally dissimilar women without absolute disloyalty to either?

They were at the door of the dining-room and Priscilla drew apart from him at his words, exclaiming eagerly: "I'm just in the mood for something lovely; I'm sure it is."

For the next few minutes both her and Blaisdell's attention was absorbed in observing the effect produced on the children by the glittering Christmas tree. As soon as the glut of presents which it held for the little ones had been

bestowed, Lora made a round of distribution among the elders. When she approached Priscilla, she held out two packages of the same size.

"Hugh has given us both the same thing this year—this is yours." She intended that her husband should understand from her words that he was forgiven, but that he was not to take the same liberty again.

She passed on and Blaisdell watched while Priscilla undid the parcel.

"Jewelry!" she exclaimed, as she caught sight of the velvet box. "It behooves the daughter of Monte Cristo to wear jewels. A bracelet! I adore it. Malachite, is it not? And green for jealousy. Yes, I am jealous. I envy you the ability to make splendid presents. It *is* delightful to have money. Will you fasten it on, Hugh, and wish me success in my crusade in behalf of common-sense—sense where the Common is concerned?"

"I will be an annual subscriber—a life-member of the organization." He slipped the glittering hoop around her wrist and secured the clasp. "What a beautiful arm you have!" he said, as if it were a discovery.

"Now that it is set off by fine gold. What is Lora's bracelet like?"

"Ask her to let you see it and then tell her that it is not her Christmas present," he said eagerly.

"You are teasing her?"

"I take my oath that she'll forgive me."

Priscilla turned and waved her arm. "See what I've got, Lora. Yours can't be any prettier."

"I've scarcely looked at mine," retorted Lora. Nevertheless, she opened the box, which was still in her hand, and put on the other bracelet.

Priscilla glided to where she was standing. "One's as

pretty as the other. There's absolutely nothing to choose between them," she said after a moment.

"That's what I told Hugh," responded Lora, a little dryly. "He showed them to me for a moment before you came. If you prefer mine——"

"If I did," interjected Priscilla—and she looked a little queer—"I'd make you exchange, for it isn't your real Christmas present and it is mine."

"What!"

The others in the company had been listening to the dialogue. "Lora," cried Mrs. Avery, "there's one package which you've overlooked; that big bough concealed it." Whereupon, stepping forward, she detached from the tree a large envelope. "It seems to be addressed to you."

"It's Hugh's handwriting." The bubbling laugh contended with a gulp of contrition. Silently she untied the pink ribbon and broke the seals. She stared for a moment at the document which she drew forth.

"It's a deed," prompted Priscilla, who was looking over her shoulder. "I've seen one at Miss Chippendale's."

"Of a house in Boston?" she cried in a flash. "Tell me it is, Hugh."

Blaisdell enjoyed her ecstasy. "Of a house on the sunny side of Commonwealth Avenue," he said with measured triumph.

"Oh, you darling! It's the only thing in the world I wanted which I haven't got." She ran forward and threw her arms about his neck. "Do you hear that, mother?—a house on Commonwealth Avenue! Ah," she cried, looking at the smiling faces around her, "you all knew about it. It's a plot—a lovely, wicked plot. And you contrived it, you naughty, clever man, and it succeeded. But

I don't care, because it's true—it's true. The flounder is a duck."

"The flounder?" ejaculated her mother.

"That's what is called on the stage an aside. A little private joke between me and my—ha! ha! Western conscience."

"I wasn't in the secret, for one," said Priscilla. "Hugh used me as a catspaw—beguiled me with this," and she help up her decorated arm. "But I love surprises and—and this fairly takes the breath away."

"I'll give you a ball, Priscilla, next winter—it shall be our house-warming."

"But I haven't told you whose house it is," said Blaisdell, and he paused like one holding back a choice bit of news. "It's the residence of one of Boston's most—er—consequential citizens, a gentleman whose name is familiar to you all, a member of a family which is supposed to be endowed with uncommonly blue blood, Mr. Harrison Chippendale."

Mrs. Avery hastened to crystallize the thought which occurred to every one. "Mercy! Why does he wish to sell?"

"I was told indirectly that his circumstances are a little straitened—that he can't stand the modern pace—the pace which kills if you try to run several establishments with all the comforts of home on an old-fashioned income. He has been wool-gathering, I suppose, and hasn't realized how fast the world is moving, until he suddenly found himself hard up."

"Hard up?" echoed Mr. Avery. "I had been brought up to believe that the Chippendales were among the richest people in Boston. You amaze me. It won't suit him at all, poor man. The world seems turning topsy-turvy.

He hard up and I a—a Monte Cristo. Their ancestors were merchant-princes."

"I'd rather have his house than any one's," said Lora.

"I went all over it the other day, from top to bottom," said her mother, "and you're to have it just as it stands, furniture and all, except the pictures. Hugh tried to induce him to sell the family portraits—through the broker, of course—but I guess they're not quite destitute enough for that. They still have their place on the North Shore."

"What beggarly pride to refuse!" cried Priscilla. She spoke like one suddenly roused from a trance by a jarring sound, for she had been standing in a brown study since the announcement of Mr. Chippendale's necessity. In the wake of her surprise had come the thought—What will Henry Sumner say to this? Will it not gall him to the quick? Be wormwood to his aristocratic spirit? She could not refrain from reflecting that the whirligig of time was bringing its revenges. Yet in the next breath she found herself listening to Mrs. Avery's recital. When she had uttered the sarcasm she realized that the others were looking at her inquiringly, as if they were not certain of her meaning; but she caught an amused gleam in her father's eyes.

"I suppose it's a question of price even where family portraits are concerned. Naturally they come high—but there is a price." So stated Blaisdell with philosophic assurance, and evidently for her benefit.

"Oh, no. The Chippendales never would sell theirs—at any price. I don't admire some of their qualities, as you know, but I'm positive of that. If you imagine otherwise, you don't understand them, Hugh." Priscilla was flushing from astonishment at her own earnestness.

Blaisdell noticed her demeanor and squared his jaw.

"Not understand them?" he said benignly. "They would hate to sell them, of course. They would never part with them for a song. But suppose—just suppose that some one with a first-class fortune, a man to whom a million dollars more or less was a bagatelle, were to offer one of them—that young civic reformer Henry Chippendale Sumner, for instance—a million for his family portraits, if he has any? A rich man's whim—took an inordinate fancy to them, was bent on having them at any price. Would he or any Chippendale feel justified in refusing? A hundred thousand dollars, possibly, yes; but how about a cool, comfortable million?"

"No one but an insane man would offer that for family pictures," murmured Mrs. Avery.

"I don't know, mother. As Hugh says, an obstinate multimillionaire, who hadn't any of his own, might possibly set his heart on some which were awfully old and real. He just might. And then——"

"It would be exactly like him to refuse—exactly like him. And the larger the sum offered, the more firmly would he stick to it." Blaisdell's allusion to Henry Sumner had flustered Priscilla for a moment; it seemed too much like mind-reading. She had caught her breath, but now the words flowed defiantly. "I grant that you understand everything and everybody else in the world, Hugh; but I'm sure you don't understand the Chippendales. I'm sure I don't; they're made up of inconsistencies. And as for Henry Chippendale Sumner"—she laughed as she spoke—"he's a Chippendale incarnate—stiff and narrow—unornamental—self-righteous—a chronic objector—and frightfully proper. But it has been slowly dawning on me lately that under it all he may be an idealist—an idealist in disguise—stunted in the growth by his own inherent frosti-

ness. I used to think that he was a haughty time-server, and hadn't a drop of red blood in his entire system, and—and I hated him. As it is, I pity him. There's a difference. Yet I can't be called exactly prejudiced in his favor. And I know you're mistaken—completely mistaken."

"There's no danger of his being tempted," answered Blaisdell, "so we shall never know."

"But it wouldn't tempt him; that's the very point," Priscilla flashed back. "That's the inhuman—the irritating—the tantalizing part of it. He's made that way. The best thing which could happen to him, in my opinion," she continued pensively, "would be some moral downfall—to be swept off the pillar of his strict propriety by something or somebody vicious or forbidden, so that he would have to wear sackcloth and ashes for—six months at least. That might possibly cure him."

"I don't see how he was able to resist you," lisped Lora, "for there used to be a terribly vicious look in your eyes while he was talking to you in the old days on Dartmouth Street."

"But he was able, my dear—he was able. A lofty moral principle kept us apart—so far as he was concerned, though I didn't understand it at the time. And the saddest part is—so far as I am concerned—that I have since discovered that he was right—convincingly, painfully right."

But Mrs. Avery was unwilling to let the precise point at issue be obscured without a final word. "A cool, comfortable million! If it comes to right and wrong, I should call it a moral downfall to refuse a million—a foolish, sentimental flying in the face of Providence. For, after all, one does need so many things nowadays more than family portraits. I used to be rather sorry, Priscilla, that you

didn't marry Mr. Sumner. But, as he appears to be far from practical, I dare say it was just as well, even if he does live on the water side of Beacon Street."

"I am sure of it," assented Priscilla. "But I wouldn't have looked quite so vicious if I had realized at the time that he was a stunted idealist."

"I will go farther," remarked Blaisdell as he slipped into his pocket the deed of the Commonwealth Avenue house, which his wife had handed him for safe keeping. "In the present age of the world it is really a moral downfall for any man not to hold on to what he has, and, if he has a million, not to leave two. And as for the practical qualities of your friend Sumner, I may as well inform you, Priscilla, that the committee on the Subway has decided against him. I was told so confidentially this morning."

"My friend!" repeated Priscilla. "I used to be his only enemy in this family." She fingered her bracelet for a moment, then threw up her head and looked at Blaisdell with an air of challenge. "If he only would not continue to wear that little round felt hat, I think I should be rather proud to be his friend."

CHAPTER XII

"HAVE you heard of the engagement in high life?" asked Morgan Drake as he unfolded his napkin at the luncheon table of the Sphinx Club.

The Sphinx Club was an aggregation of artists, writers, musicians, men of science with a large sprinkling of doctors, and a certain number of unlabelled spirits who were

chiefly good fellows. It was a brotherhood as well as a club, for the members were intimate, and their distinction as a body was their devotion to whatever they undertook, be it a dinner in honor of some one who had merited the world's praise, a public cause which required to be fervently abetted, or their own more private social rites at which they relaxed most humanly. To foster and protect the arts, to protest against Philistinism and humbug, and to let down the barriers between soul and soul was the bond which held them together, though the words of the Club's printed constitution left almost as much to the imagination as its name. The Sphinx! symbol of inscrutable mystery and silent power. Now the Sphinx Club fostered mystery, but its power was genial rather than silent. Everybody felt at home there. At luncheon, the favorite meeting-time, those who came sat comradelike, touching elbows at one large round table.

On this particular day the number of those still at table had been reduced to half a dozen, for it was late. No one spoke in answer to Morgan's inquiry, but all looked expectant, so he had the satisfaction of stating:

"Miss Beatrice Langdon to Chauncey Chippendale."

The announcement was interesting. Most of the men knew one or both of the engaged couple. General Horatio Langdon was a member of the club and often took an active part in its festivities.

"General Langdon's second daughter?" queried some one.

"Yes."

There was a pause and then Professor Paton said: "That young man has fallen on his feet again." No one seemed disposed to dispute this declaration. On the contrary, the faces around him suggested that he had ex-

pressed the general thought. "From the foot-ball field to the counting-room, from the counting-room via the stock exchange to the banker's daughter, from the banker's daughter to solid citizenship and capitalistic complacency," he continued. Every one laughed at the summary if lengthy epigram. Chauncey Chippendale was not a member of the Sphinx.

"How these capitalists abuse each other," retorted Morgan Drake. "I detect sheer envy in Fuzzy Wuzzy's remarks."

Professor Paton had won this nickname not from his heavy, piratical mustache, which might have justified it, but from his predilection for reciting Kipling's verses of that title. Some student had given it to him, and the Sphinx Club had perpetuated the epithet. Morgan's accusation was based on the general club knowledge that the professor was the owner of a block of Electric Coke, and consequently had become able to commit all sorts of financial indiscretions.

The professor ignored the taunt, or rather he defended himself indirectly. "Chauncey Chippendale is a good fellow in the modern sense of the word, and it's evident that he is going to be a very successful fellow in the modern sense of the word. But what has made him so? What is his stock in trade? An agreeable exterior, a muscular personality, humorous horse sense, and the ambition to make a lot of money quickly. And he's supposed to be the flower of Boston youth—a Chippendale. Everything which savors of scholarly interests bores him. His conversation is complacently limited to the stock market, athletic sports and humorous stories. He's manly—oh, yes, he's manly; but he isn't educated."

"But you are, Fuzzy," replied Morgan. "Educated,

I mean—and envious, too. You're envious of him, and I'm envious of you. Your coffers are bursting with Electric Coke, you've brought out your *magnum opus*, you may be raised any time to a full professorship, and, comparatively speaking, you're a devilish eminent member of society. As for me, I'm poor as a church mouse, and no one will buy my books because I persist in trying to tell the truth as I see it instead of writing love stories with a hopeful note."

"Yes, I am educated and I'm proud of the fact. But what, pray, do I envy Chauncey Chippendale?"

"The fact that he is engaged to be married—that his best girl has accepted him."

"What has matrimony to do with the question?"

"Everything. It's the civilized woman's privilege to pick out the father of her children by the process of elimination. She gives the mitten to the man she doesn't fancy. You're eminent in your way, as I said just now, but where the mating girl is concerned, you're a side show compared with a person like Chauncey Chippendale. The hero of the modern mating girl is the man who does deeds which can be measured in dollars and cents—the man who incidentally will give her everything she desires and deck her with jewels. You are—we are, figuratively speaking, mildewed—too much sicklied o'er with the pale cast of introspective thought. And she's right."

"Who's right?"

"Woman. If we were geniuses, she'd jump at us as of yore; but she knows we're not; that we're merely leftovers. She knows that Boston has ceased to be a literary centre and—and become only a second-rate industrial hive. 'Ichabod, thy glory has departed.' 'There were giants in those days.' How many men in Harvard College

would know where those quotations come from? No, Fuzzy, turn your critical eyes on your introspective soul and acknowledge that, matrimonially speaking, we are bargain sales—the aftermath of a fashion which has spent itself. Cheer up, old man," he continued after the laughter had subsided, "I don't mean that we may not be married some day. There are women, remember, in the same predicament as we—mildewed. But the fresh-faced daughters of the morning star are not for us."

Everybody smiled, for it was currently reported that the frowning professor, by way of recognizing that his long devotion in a certain quarter was hopeless, had recently begun to make frequent calls on the younger Miss Sumner, one of Henry's sisters.

"And if so—and if so, are we tamely to submit? Are we to gnash our teeth, but utter no protest? Become fawning fags of the illiterate money power?"

"Fawning fags is beautiful. What we—you and I, Fuzzy—need," interposed Morgan, resting his head on his hands and gazing across the table contemplatively, "to make us appear respectable—to redeem us in the eyes of the illiterate money power—is a cause, a burning cause. *Wanted*, a cause to take the place of Brook Farm and Transcendentalism and the Anti-Slavery movement and the Civil War—something to fuse our doubts in the crucible of fiery action! No true Bostonian was ever happy without a burning cause—ever happy or ever really useful."

"Are you hankering after another war?" asked one of the men.

"Heaven forbid! Are not half the Club members of the Society for the Perpetuation of Peace? Only some great impulse to make us forget our doubts."

"Our doubts?" queried the professor doggedly. "What doubts?"

Morgan indulged in a sardonic smile. "Oh, so many. But first of all our great doubt—whether democracy is not making a mess of things."

"Democracy—tiresome, overworked word," groaned Paton. "A specious excuse for mediocre standards all along the line. I am proud of being a critic no less than of being reasonably well educated."

"We are in the same boat, Fuzzy. We avert our eyes or hold our noses, and feel ordained to pick everything to pieces. We're so sad while the others are so glad; and the most hopeless thing for you and me," he went on ruefully, "is that I shrewdly suspect there *is* a burning cause right under our noses—just like Electric Coke—only we shut our eyes to it because—because we don't wish to recognize it; and it's no other than that self-same tiresome, overworked democracy."

The professor gave a vicious twist to his moustache and said audibly to his neighbor, "Drake is sometimes taken this way; he's half a socialist."

Morgan nodded. "Intellectually I'm a radical; temperamentally, I'm a carping, over-sensitive aristocrat. But really, you know," he exclaimed wistfully, "what I was just saying is true. Boston's burning causes in the past have been ideals—liberty, the freeing of the slave, the saving of the Union, the uplifting and refining of the individual soul by the white light of Concord philosophy. Our ancestors breathed an upper air—or thought they did. We would fain do the same and lo! the yellow newspaper, the huge department store, the toiling mass, the vicious professional politician, and, last and greatest—the flower and quintessence of it all—the exuberant captain of in-

dustry, overflowing with efficiency, prosperity and optimism, come trooping by and we fail to thrill to the music of the latest world-movement—the march of the common herd. Not only do we decline to illuminate our houses in honor of the procession—extinguishing every light and pulling down the blinds—but we squat on the roofs and shy missiles at the transparencies."

"Hear—hear," cried several voices, as Morgan paused for breath.

"We do," said the professor stoutly. "We will remain Concord minute-men to the last. Let them hang us to the lamp-posts if they choose."

"But they won't. If we decline to sympathize and cooperate, they'll simply ignore us—crowd us out. It's the march of destiny; the Celtic pick-and-shovel men of the North End have become rich contractors in Roxbury; their tenements are in possession of the Italians, Poles and Jews; there isn't a decent morning newspaper in what was once the literary centre of America, and Hugh McD. Blaisdell is in the seats of the mighty on Commonwealth Avenue. We are out of date, out of step, Fuzzy. We were born too late in a Boston grown too big and easy-going. And here comes the most uncompromising of us all"—he added as Henry Sumner strode into the room.

"Have you heard the news?" asked Henry eagerly, as he took a seat at the table.

"Your cousin's engagement," said several at once.

Henry looked aghast. "It isn't to come out for three days yet."

"That's what three different people informed me at the time they informed me," said Morgan. "But they knew. It's all over town, dear boy."

"But the notes announcing it don't go out until to-

morrow and most of the relations haven't been told yet," replied Henry with concern. "I haven't breathed it to a soul."

"These are degenerate days, Henry," remarked the professor. "Our most sacred usages are being violated; there is no longer a New England conscience."

"So it seems in more ways than one. What do you suppose that man Blaisdell proposes to do now? Erect a towering building on the slope of Beacon Hill. Bachelors' apartments, story on story—an eyesore to the neighborhood."

"Blaisdell!" ejaculated the professor. "A case which cries to heaven. And yet, when you came in, Morgan was berating us for our lack of sympathy with triumphant democracy—invoking us to cease to be mere obstructionists and to extend the right hand of coöperation to the exultant and progressive money power. And he cited Hugh McD. Blaisdell as the flower and quintessence of the new world movement."

"I have tried to coöperate with him; be lenient toward his point of view," cried Henry tensely. "And just as I begin to calm down and to hope that he really intends to be a public benefactor after all, he does some other monstrous thing like this. Are mere huge rentals," he added, turning toward Morgan Drake, "a legitimate civilized excuse for ruining the symmetry of a picturesque neighborhood? Or put it this way—is the man who shuts his eyes to every sentimental and æsthetic consideration to be allowed to usurp leadership in a city like this without protest? I don't wish to be a mere obstructionist; I believe in democratic progress, but—but is nothing to control but mere dollars and cents?"

"Don't glare at me, Henry," said Morgan. "I glory in

being an obstructionist—though I may starve in consequence. So does Fuzzy, notwithstanding he is in Electric Coke. So do you—in spite of having been told you are a crank. That's our constitutional defect. Consequently, we become mere flies on the chariot wheel of progress. Blaisdell will tell you, of course, that he owes a moral duty to his syndicate, his *cestuis*, or whomever he represents to develop the property for all it is worth. Be grateful if he doesn't let the roof space for a huge signboard to advertise a breakfast food or patent medicine. It's within the law, but I don't believe he'll do it. Blaisdell is a moral man in his way."

"That's the infernal part of it," said Henry who was making pellets of his bread as he listened. "He always has a plausible argument for whatever he does. My immediate impulse was to apply for an injunction; but the first person I encountered—it was—er—a friend of his, and I spoke my mind—defended him as you have and had the argument pat. Oh, I see, I see. We're powerless. He stands transfigured, morally vindicated, I dare say. Only what are we coming to?"

"He has just subscribed ten thousand dollars to the Harvard athletic fund," said Professor Paton gloomily.

"But give the devil his due, Fuzzy—he presented twenty thousand to the Art Museum and fifteen to the Maternity Hospital," retorted Morgan.

"And he bought two of Burton's pictures—just like a real Mecænas. I have been advising people to buy them —telling them they were dirt cheap—every time Burton gave an exhibition, but they were afraid. They wanted a lead. They've got it, and now Burton's prices will go up." The speaker was one of the artists.

"I know. And all Boston was at his wife's ball last

week," admitted the professor. "They listened to Melba sing, consumed his champagne and terrapin, and apologized to themselves for being there."

"I had to go for personal reasons," said Henry solicitously. "I am intimate with Miss Avery. Lots of people didn't go—people whom they didn't know and whom they invited. For instance, neither my Uncle Harrison nor any of his immediate family were there."

"And I dare say the Blaisdells didn't understand why buying a house from a man doesn't constitute him a social acquaintance," said the professor. "When a woman's motto is, 'don't wait to be invited by the people you wish to know,' her husband's bowing acquaintance in an elevator will serve as an introduction. The opportunity to hear Melba sing free during the supper hour was too much for the average New England conscience. We three all went of course, as old acquaintances—social relics of the merry Saturday nights when Lora sang Gilbert and Sullivan, and Mrs. Avery cooked Welsh rabbits. It was gorgeously done—a little too gorgeously; and save that she didn't know the people, Lora—Mrs. Blaisdell was equal to the emergency. As for Miss Avery"—he lingered on the word and lit a cigar before proceeding to finish these critical memories of the late entertainment—"she gave an air of distinction to any part of the room in which she appeared. And it's a comfort to remember that her stock is the old stock—generations of low living and high thinking." The Professor had renounced personal hopes, hut he could be manfully magnanimous, and this might have been termed a swan song.

"An intelligent and not too atrabilious summary, Fuzzy," said Morgan. Then, putting his arm around the shoulder of Henry, who was sitting next to him eating in

silence, he whispered, "Was it she who defended Blaisdell about the apartment house?"

"It was."

"How she does stand up for him! That in itself ought to show there's lots of good in the man."

Henry was silent a moment. "I repeat, I'm not such a crank that I glory in being chiefly an obstructionist," he said presently. "I tell you I'm not," he asserted, since Morgan began to blow rings of smoke which he ascribed to sardonic doubt. "I'm endeavoring to reform."

"I admit you're becoming almost a dandy in your dress," observed Morgan. "Your neck-tie the other day had a dash of color that was positively hectic. And I notice you've banished the little round gray felt hat. How many years have you clung to that?"

"It was comfortable. Well, those are the outer manifestations of a spiritual change. A man grows older, and sees things in a different light. But when, as Fuzzy says, our most sacred usages are violated, how is one to avoid being a crank sometimes?"

Morgan put his arm around his friend's shoulder again and whispered, "Did she request you to burn the little round gray hat?"

"She did not. You know as well as I do that she does not trouble herself about my exterior."

"A woman invariably keeps her eye—the corner of her eye on a persevering man. Yet I do agree that she is more bent on convincing your uncompromising soul than on rectifying your ungainly person. Why don't you put the question to her instead of to me?"

"It's a matter of character, not of sentiment. But since you ascribe my realization of my shortcomings to—some one in particular—I have asked the question of her sub-

stantially more than once. And invariably—sooner or later, she has referred me to the same model. Not in exact words—but her intimations have said only too plainly, 'that is the man to imitate.' I have tried to see him with her eyes, and, though outwardly resolute, I have gone away almost pentinent—certainly conciliatory. But a week later finds me fuming again over some such thing as this apartment house—his handiwork. All the while the model prospers—flourishes like the bay tree; he stands the embodiment of genial common-sense; but I seem to remain as I began—though, confound it all," he added with a doughty nod, "I do think I've improved."

The others had left the table. He and Morgan were alone. They were close friends, and what Henry had just said was virtually a confidence—an unbosoming of his perplexities, which he knew might be treated whimsically, but would not be abused.

"All this comes of wooing a proud beauty." Morgan stirred the sugar in his black coffee. "Who is going to tame her, I wonder? She has only the corner of her eye on you, Henry. Her full gaze is fixed on——"

He paused and Henry answered without hesitation, "The ideal man."

"I believe you're right. And suppose she doesn't find him? Stick to her, Henry. Girls like that can sometimes be tired out. Blaisdell is happily married. Or shall I say happily is married?"

Henry made an impatient movement. "I don't choose to believe that she would marry him if he were free. That may be fatuous—but Miss Avery is to me the ideal woman."

"Bravo! introspective, thin-blooded Bostonian. And now she is an heiress to boot."

"Yes. That will broaden her life."

"But your slightly gloomy tone suggests that it does not help your individual chances. Hasn't your spiritual change overcome your congenial tendency to shy at a rich girl? I was predestined to fall in love with a poor one. But if you let your New England conscience conjure up an imaginary barrier between you because of Electric Coke, you deserve to lose the ideal woman."

"But—but I shall have to explain to you that I—er—implied to her once that I couldn't afford to marry her. I don't mean by this," Henry hastened to add, "that she cared for me in the least. In fact, she assured me to the contrary in unmistakable terms. I had been on the point of offering myself to her, but discovered that I had to earn my own living. I was in no position to support a wife, and so——"

"You told her so. A case of conscience. I see it all." Morgan could not restrain his mirth. "You played into her hands, Henry. And I perceive your predicament—you would naturally feel a little hesitation about implying to her under her present opulent circumstances that you are ready now to run the risk."

"I merely wished you to understand that it was not an ordinary case of shying at a rich girl."

Morgan put his head on one side reflectively. "Henry, since you are bent on spiritual change, why don't you try flirting desperately with some one else? If you have scruples against endangering another heart, you might let the victim into the secret. Or sow a few belated wild oates."

Henry shook his head. "I can't make believe. She would detect the imposture provided it interested her sufficiently to notice it."

"Yes," said Morgan with a sigh, "I dare say you would

cut a very unconvincing figure. Your virtue, Henry, is your worst enemy. You're constitutionally unfitted for the part."

"Don't I know it? Don't I know, too, that she regards me as incapable of passion—a sort of crawfish lover. There's from her point of view my most unpardonable defect. And while I don't admit for a minute being much worse than morally clean and a little shy, there's just a scintilla of truth which justifies her. One of the chief consequences of introspection is the ability to submit one's own shortcomings to the microscope. I'm painfully aware that she believes I have no red blood in my veins. Oh, yes, there lies the crux of the whole situation."

Morgan had listened appreciatively to the almost impassioned harangue. "You were always intelligent, Henry. But your own recognition of all this puts a new face on it. And any one can see the change. You no longer take your glass of wine and smoke your cigar as if under protest. Any mother would still trust her daughter with you on a dark night, but you have ceased to be a walking rebuke to immorality. Even she must have noticed that your virtue no longer sticks out so obtrusively as formerly. Your perseverance is a part of your destiny—to go plodding along year in and year out in pursuit of the same woman after she has persistently refused you on the score that you are constitutionally cold and unromantic; for whatever you may be inwardly, the leopard can't change his spots. You always will be what you are, thank God. (I say thank God advisedly). You always will be sighing for the stars with the manners of a Puritan, just as you always will be thin and exceedingly anxious to do right. Stick to her, Henry."

Henry rose. "There's the very point—the leopard can't

change his spots. He can change his habits, but not his besetting nature. And there's where we are. And nothing else would count. Besides, I've temporarily reached the limit of my spiritual progress."

"You mean that it's the turn now of the ideal woman to make concessions?"

"I mean that a man cannot afford to sacrifice every conviction merely because he is in love."

"How like a Bostonian to say 'merely' when weighing love in the scales with moral duty. And yet you demur at not being mistaken for a fiery furnace."

Henry tapped his breast. "The furnace is there just the same. It seems always to be my—destiny, as you call it—to have this doubted. Oh, yes," he added, pulling the brown drooping mustache which now shielded the severity of his mouth, "I admit that 'merely' was just like me. But as to sticking, you know equally well, Morgan, that I not only intend to persevere, but—but, that in my inexpressive way, the issue means life or death to me. And no one would ever guess it. That's what you're thinking, isn't it? I must be going."

Morgan wrinkled his brow, then hooking his arm through Henry's, he walked with him to the head of the stair leading down from the dining-room. "You address me as a philosopher—and as a friend. Why should your ardor be so unconvincing? I can see from the worried look in your conscientious eyes that you fear you may be late for an engagement, but," he said, detaining him by the button of his coat, "you have sought counsel and you must listen. Suppose, Henry, that you were to hear to-morrow that Miss Avery—the ideal woman—was married. What would you do? Something desperate—blood-curdling—unseemly—spectacular? No, you would submit sadly but decently;

drop ashes on the fiery furnace, cherish her image, maybe, to the grave—for I agree that you are the embodiment of faithfulness—and settle down again to what you would term the serious work of life. That is so, isn't it?"

Henry's brow clouded and he drew back instinctively like one seeking to evade answering categorically an embarrassing question, but the inquisitor clung tenaciously to the button. "Do? What could I do?" Then, seeing that Morgan was still expectant he added, "Necessarily—I should submit."

"Exactly." Morgan's tone was mournfully triumphant. "And you admit it. The other lovers the civilized world over—the Frenchman—the German—the Italian—the most conservative of them, the Englishman—Blaisdell, yes, Blaisdell—every one but a simon pure Bostonian would do the same—submit and settle down. But they wouldn't be aware of it in advance," he cried eagerly. "They would declare when confronted, as I have confronted you, that they were liable to blow their brains out in the event of losing the ideal woman. If you had only said 'liable,' Henry!" Morgan let go the button with the finality of a physician who has clearly diagnosed a case of cardiac lesion.

"To blow one's brains out in this age of the world——"

"Would be incompatible with the highest type of manhood. Indisputably. But to be certain in advance that one wouldn't—there's the crucial point, my dear fellow."

Henry flushed. Yet what was this but a reiteration in another form of what he had previously admitted? He threw up his head. "It is sorry comfort to be informed on the verge of middle life that it is the lot of the introspective Bostonian not to know that he is not in love. Has the philosopher and friend the antidote?"

"You know that the truth is more precious to you

than anything else, Henry. What do we live for—you and I—except the truth? There is no antidote."

"Yet it was you who urged me to stick to her."

"I do still, unhesitatingly. You do not comprehend my full purpose, Henry; which was to be encouraging—discriminately stimulating. Mind you, if she belonged to any one of the foreign nationalities—were any one in fact but a Bostonian—your case might be hopeless; she might never be able to discover how much you really do care—for you do care a lot, Henry. And domestically you would be the salt of the earth. But she is a Bostonian—not one of the mildewed kind, but one of the daughters of the morning—and she glories in having flung off the shackles of introspection. Can one thus escape destiny? At least," he continued eagerly, and reaching out he seized once more the button of Henry's coat as if to make sure that this essence of his counsel should not be missed, "at least it behooves us as introspective spirits to ask and ponder that question. Can the leopardess change her spots? She is single still and past twenty-five. Think of that. She has not yet found the ideal man. Think of that. Suppose she does not find him?" Morgan put the hypothesis in a dramatic whisper and pausing, with his whimsical face aslant, looked at Henry.

"Quit your nonsense. This heritage of turning people inside out—it is one thing to apply the process to me, another——"

But Morgan waved away the remonstrance as trivial. His knowing countenance scintillated with sophisticated conviction. "Be on the alert," he exclaimed; "watch for the moment when she discovers that he does not exist. Go to her then, and she may fall with a dull, sickening thud into your arms."

Henry almost blushed. This violent metaphor so vividly portrayed the act of self-surrender that, although the prophecy was an illuminating confirmation of his own secret hopes, he stood momentarily flustered. Doubtless Morgan misinterpreted this as dismay at the outlook, for he declared almost defiantly:

"It's your only hope."

Henry hastened to mollify him by absolute acquiescence. "I've realized for some time that if she does so—turns to me, it will be as a last resort."

"If? It's a foregone conclusion that she will," he cried with trenchant conviction. "Properly handled it becomes a perfect cinch."

Then, as Henry lingered, gasping at this other bold figure of speech, Morgan pushed him down the staircase exclaiming: "If you're not careful, you'll be late for your engagement and duty will have been sacrificed to that wanton handmaiden 'mere' love."

CHAPTER XIII

HENRY'S engagement was with his mother. He had promised to devote his Saturday afternoon to her, and he now proceeded to hasten homeward. During these occasional outings together they were apt to make the round of the new sights of interest; visit some current exhibition by a rising artist at the gallery of one of the local picture dealers; look in at the bric-a-brac or new Japanese stores with an eye primarily to æsthetic cultivation, but also in the hope of seeing just the right thing for a wedding present (for Mrs. Sumner invariably had a prospective

wedding present at the back of her mind); scrutinize the aspect of the new Public Library in Copley Square, and finally, bring up at the Art Museum, where, in addition to the pictures, potteries and casts with which they were already familiar, there was certain to be some artistic novelty, lavishly purchased as a masterpiece with the precious funds of the institution, around which the currents of counter criticism played bewilderingly. In her circle there were invariably, to begin with, people who denied that the masterpiece was an original; others who disputed its merit; and everybody with an artistic New England conscience felt obliged to inspect it in order to have an opinion on the subject.

Once in a while the mother and son would vary the programme by a trip to the suburbs. There was Colonel Sumner's grave at Mt. Auburn to be tended, and in the same cemetery, not far from this, the family vault in which several generations of Chippendales reposed, marked by a tall, commanding shaft of plain granite. It was Mrs. Sumner's wish to be buried beside her husband out of sentiment for him, but she approved of Henry's eager intention to be cremated as sanitary and sensible. On the way back they were apt to stop at Harvard to look at some new building or to revisit the wonderful collection of glass flowers in the Agassiz museum. Indeed, it may fairly be said that Mrs. Sumner's vision as a cultivated woman was bounded on the north by Harvard College, on the east by the dome of the State House and by Boston Common, on the south by the Boston Art Museum, and on the west by Mt. Auburn cemetery. And latterly might be added, on the north, north-east by the Associated Charities, and on the south, south-west by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Whatever affected these land-

marks stirred her deeply, for they seemed to her to represent individually and to embody collectively the spirit of enlightened human progress. Her husband's glorious but untimely death had deprived him of the privilege of helping to safeguard these spiritual points of the compass, but she had successfully endeavored to transmit to Henry her own allegiance. And naturally, for it had become almost a heritage of the Chippendales to be loyal to them in an official capacity. Her father had been an Overseer of Harvard College. Her brother Harrison was an Overseer and also a trustee of the Art Museum. Her sister Georgiana was a liberal and willing contributor to the subscription lists constantly in private circulation for purposes connected with one or the other of these institutions, and her brother Baxter was a member of Mt. Auburn Cemetery Corporation. She herself was on the Board of Associated Charities, to the funds of which she made a generous annual donation, and in the practical philanthropic work of which both her daughters took part. And from the establishment of the Symphony Orchestra all of the family, except Baxter, had been assiduous season ticket holders. In short, Mrs. Sumner prided herself on being a thorough-going Bostonian, and would have resented being mistaken for anything else. She cherished the city's traditions, and she desired that her children should be associated with and help to preserve those social institutions which she had been taught to venerate.

At the time of depreciation in the shares of the Warrior Mills she had felt obliged to retrench—to look more closely after her expenses and cut off superfluities, but there had been no question of moving from their Beacon Street house. She had approved of Harrison's conduct in accepting a large price for his and retiring temporarily to

Beverly for the winter. It had been a family humiliation, of course, this forced acknowledgment that her respected brother's expenses had outrun his income. But what else was there for one with Chippendale standards to do? She could sympathize if she could not exonerate him from extravagance. There was so much more elaboration in living, and the temptation was constantly present to try to do for one's children as much as other people were doing for theirs. Her sister-in-law had been possessed from their dancing-school days with a nervous fear lest her daughters should become old maids. Counting her own two, there were still five unmarried marriageable girls of Chippendale stock, which was, of course, when viewed dispassionately, rather appalling. But Professor Paton was certainly very attentive to her own Barbara. Mrs. Sumner hoped there might be something in this, for their tastes were similar and an engagement would be likely to dissipate the somewhat morbid tendencies of her daughter. That is, Barbara was tormented by over-conscientiousness in petty matters, For instance, if she claimed that the ball was on the line at tennis, she was haunted by the fear that she had been inaccurate; and she was constantly correcting her decisions of this sort or else worrying over them, which was trying to her own and other people's nerves. But though Mrs. Sumner believed that it would correct itself in time, and that it was indicative of character, she hoped that Professor Paton would propose soon.

For three years now Harrison and his family had been spending the winter at Beverly—a sort of Spartan exile. By means of putting a furnace into the house, they had managed to live sufficiently comfortably. He had been true to his principles as a Chippendale, and what had been the result? The girls had been constantly invited to stay with

friends in town during the dancing season. Moreover, Georgy had been as much of a belle as ever; two or three young men were said to be anxious to marry her. Strangely enough, too, though Harrison had felt obliged to part with his Commonwealth Avenue house, he had recently seen fit to refuse one hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the place on the North Shore—those dozen acres well wooded, yet commanding the sea, which he had bought for less than a fifth of the sum twenty-five years before. And people who ought to know were confident it would become even more valuable. Certainly the chances of real life were constantly proving stranger than any fiction. Finally Chauncey had made what might fairly be termed a brilliant match. The Langdons were people of character as well as people of substance. The moral of these reflections Mrs. Sumner imparted to Henry as she left the house.

"One can truly say, still, that it makes no difference in Boston whether people have money or not. Provided they have position and are acceptable in themselves, no one asks the question. Your Aunt Margaret and I may not be entirely in accord as to methods of education—as to what is best worth striving for in life—but she has a right to be gratified—indeed, we all have, Henry—that the reduction in their father's income and the publicity resulting from the sale of their house has not affected in the slightest degree the social standing of your cousins. But though the changes which have taken place in Boston since I was a girl are simply amazing from the point of view of an older generation, it is comforting to be able to feel that whatever its shortcomings, and in spite of the fact that the names of more than one-half of the people who have bought houses on this street mean absolutely nothing to me"—at the moment they were crossing Commonwealth

Avenue by way of Dartmouth Street—"Boston is not a plutocratic city. Something continues to count here besides mere money. The sight of your Uncle Harrison's house reminds me, Henry, to ask if what I heard yesterday is true, that the people who bought it—the Blaisdells—have bought the one adjoining in order to have a music room. That they are going abroad for the summer and that the two houses are to be thrown into one while they're away?"

"Oh, yes, it's true. The deed has passed. Money doesn't seem to count with them, does it?"

"Especially as they remodelled and redecorated the house from top to bottom before moving in less than two years ago. It suggests a restless spirit. Don't suppose that I do not realize, dear boy, that it will be a constant fight to preserve the traditions. You in your way and Chauncey in his. There's no reason why Boston, because it is becoming a big city, should cease to be a discriminating one."

"No one will ever discriminate against Chauncey."

Mrs. Sumner, though puzzled, was too discerning a woman to murmur, "why should it ever occur to any one to discriminate against Chauncey?" She divined that her son must be indulging in hyperbole, and a moment's reflection caused her to reply, "Nor against either of you. In the event that discrimination becomes necessary, you both will be among those whose duty it will be to practise it—he in his way and you in yours, as I just remarked. The proportions of that building grow upon me," she added, stopping to shade her eyes and gaze critically at the recently completed Public Library. "I have definitely decided that it is not too low. Do you object, dear, to drop in at Sagasaki's before we go to see the new Rembrandt? I must select a wedding present for Marian Eckley this week."

Taking for granted that Henry would acquiesce in her proposal, Mrs. Sumner turned the corner and proceeded along Boylston Street. She walked with stately but unassuming leisureliness, as if proud of doing the things incumbent on her as a cultivated Bostonian in the company of her only son. Her bonnet had receded a little from her brow as if not securely fastened, and her black mantle edged with jet was old-fashioned in its style and had the effect of having been put on hurriedly. Yet, though another woman in the same attire might have looked dowdy, her air was one of distinction. At a gentle angle over her shoulder she carried a large fringed parasol of antiquated pattern.

"What I meant is that Chauncey is like a cat; throw him off the roof of a ten-story building and he will light on his feet," answered Henry. "He is adaptive; he knows the art of putting himself in harmony with—reconciling himself to existing conditions without—er—losing his self-respect. I quite agree with you, mother; he has done splendidly. He is in touch with the new order of things, and is, consequently, in the position to do exactly what you wish him to do in the way of discrimination."

"I wish him to do?" asked Mrs. Sumner, laughing nervously. She put her hand in her son's arm and drew him toward her exclaiming: "As if I were comparing Chauncey to you! Don't you realize that I am thankful you are different from Chauncey? Chauncey is a Chippendale, but he is also a Baxter, and more especially a Floyd. Whereas you, I am proud to be able to boast, are an unadulterated Chippendale, to say nothing of being your father's son. Oh, yes, I know, dear—Chauncey compromises and you never can. I would not have it otherwise with you. But granting this——"

"It's odious of me to seem to suggest that sort of a comparison. What I had in mind was that I don't think you appreciate how rapidly the old order is passing away; and that when a person doesn't change—won't change, he ceases to be effective. That's my case, and that's why I said no one would ever discriminate against Chauncey; for he belongs to the old and yet is able to keep step with the new. He can be a real power in Boston if he chooses to be."

"In deciding what may and what may not be done in society? From that point of view I agree that he is in a position to be listened to rather than you. Our branch of the family has never gone in for precisely that sort of thing, whereas your Uncle Harrison always has—and your Aunt Margaret even more so. My interests—and consequently yours, have been first of all, intellectual; and yet at the same time, it is absolutely important that some one should do it—stand on guard, I mean; see that people who would force lower standards upon us are not allowed to make undue headway socially. And to tell the truth, Henry" —but here Mrs. Sumner paused, arrested by something which had attracted her eye in a shop window. "Brass andirons!" she soliloquized. "Why wouldn't brass andirons be just the thing?" For a moment she stood spellbound, yet irresolute. Then the happy look faded, and, shaking her head, she murmured with a sigh, "It's so late I'm afraid she has some. There's been a run on andirons. What I started to say," she continued as she resumed her walk, "was that when I used the word 'discriminating' in connection with you and Chauncey just now I did have something particular in mind. Mrs. Staunton Townsend, while calling yesterday, told me in confidence that the committee had voted not to invite the Blaisdells—the people who bought your Uncle Harrison's house—to the Puritan

balls next year. The wife is considered pushing. I hear that she wrote to Mrs. Percy Weston, who is managing the Wednesday afternoon dancing class this year, that she would like to put down her eight-year-old daughter's name for two years hence. Naturally Mrs. Weston wrote in reply that by that time somebody else would be getting up the class. This is gossip—and you know I hate gossip, Henry. At the same time it's a straw, and does suggest they're pushing—just as buying the adjoining house does suggest they're restless. And, as Mrs. Townsend said, why should we open our drawing-rooms to people merely because they entertain lavishly and are anxious to enter them? Yes, dear, you are right, the old order is passing away in the sense that the old families in society—the people I knew as a girl—are in the minority to-day in the proportion of two to one. And yet this remains significantly true about Boston—I trust it will always continue to be true—that once in, confessedly in, a family remains so to the end. Barring a murder or financial irregularities, of course, the members may live as unostentatiously as they please, bury themselves indefinitely, dress unfashionably, and yet be sure of a welcome when they do emerge. The year Lily came out I had not been to a Puritan ball for fifteen years; yet I was accused of being the belle of the occasion. And there was a scintilla of truth in the statement." Whereupon, with a smile of self-respecting gaiety evoked by this recollection, Mrs. Sumner entered Sagasaki's and, advancing slowly, bent her gaze on the array of Japanese bric-a-brac—screens, vases, dragons, elephants—exposed for sale.

"I heard one of my contemporaries referred to the other day as dowdy—a woman whose mind is so absorbed by the higher responsibilities of life that she is liable to neglect her

personal appearance," she continued. "I admit it is a blemish; and—and I dare say there are those among the younger generation who would make the same charge about your mother." As she spoke, she deftly pulled her bonnet forward and tightened the ribbons. "How is one, Henry dear, to feel sure that these things are genuine?" she asked, holding up a delicately suffused vase. "The color is exquisite—but is it real peach-blow? Marian Eckley would never know, but—one hates to be imposed on. The dreadful thought sometimes assails one that, artistically, Boston is brimming over with fabrications. How much is this?" she inquired of the salesman.

The price asked was not exorbitant and the gesticulating salesman was emphatic as to the authenticity of the coloring process. But Mrs. Sumner's mind hung fire. Then a happy thought occurred to her. "I will come in again in a day or two," she said, restoring the vase to its position. But she whispered in Henry's ear as they passed out of the store, "I will write a line to Mr. Moore of the Art Museum and get him to step in and pass on it. It would be on his way, for he comes across the Public Garden every morning. And then we shall be certain."

"But the point I was leading up to," she resumed as they retraced their steps along Boylston Street with the purpose of visiting the new Rembrandt, "is that we who have the power—or can have it—cannot afford to let down the bars too freely at the call of every newcomer."

"I heartily agree with you, mother, in the sense in which I assume that you mean it."

"In no narrow, snobbish sense, of course. For remember, society is one vast whole. Nothing can affect it injuriously at one point without being felt throughout. And, as human nature is constituted, the favorite

line of attack of those who would consciously or unconsciously vulgarize it, is through ceaseless endeavors to make social headway. There are junctures when, if one had not relations to do it for one, it might become one's individual duty to 'emerge.' You remember your Dante: 'For sitting upon down or under quilt one cometh not to fame.'" (But Mrs. Sumner quoted the Italian—"Seggendo in piuma in fama non si vien nè sotto coltre.") "There's where Chauncey and Chauncey's wife may be useful. But there is one matter, Henry, in which I should like your active personal coöperation. Is it possible—or put it this way—I should be immensely pleased to do something socially for your friend Priscilla Avery, if, by so doing, I should not seem to be opening my arms to the entire family."

Mrs. Sumner had led up to the subject. It was not a tabooed topic—a neglected one, rather. Neglected by Henry—and his silence had been respected, especially since her casual tentative mention of her name had failed to elicit any further confidences. With the earlier passages in his courtship Mrs. Sumner had long been familiar. Her daughters had promptly heard from their cousins of the passionate avowal made at the Commonwealth Avenue house of his intention to ask the girl to marry him—information which, at the moment, had filled her with dismay. Not long after—it was during one of their afternoon walks—he had spoken briefly and she had gathered from his words that he had been rebuffed and was miserable. While her heart bled for him, immediate balm was provided by secret satisfaction that he had not, while virtually a boy, engaged himself to some one outside their circle. Presently it had come over her that he had abstained from pressing his suit out of consideration for her and the

girls, and she had endeavored by her tenderness to let him perceive that she understood.

It had chanced that until Priscilla went to live with Miss Georgiana she had never seen her—the girl who would have refused her son if he had asked her; for this was the way, Henry had insisted, that the incident should be left in her mind. Beforehand, Mrs. Sumner's private belief had been that, if the young woman had actually been given the chance, Henry would not have escaped. But the first sight of her had been rather dazing. To begin with, she was surprised at the existence, in Boston, unknown to her, of so handsome and aristocratic looking a girl. Henry's taste was vindicated; he had fallen in love with a person of neither the handkerchief box nor the untidy blue stocking variety, as she had dreaded. But granting the attractive personality—and as an idealist, Mrs. Sumner, though bewildered, admitted it—there was presumably a flaw. She had instinctively bent her critical faculties on discovering it. Her sister's companion possessed distinction and beauty; her voice was neither nasal nor high-pitched; what she uttered was spirited and intelligent: but —but (the illuminating phrase came to her in a flash)— did not the girl lack intellectual modesty? Yes, this was certainly it; she was too self-confident, too exuberantly positive that she was right; in short, forth-putting—a dreadful word in Mrs. Sumner's vocabulary. And along the lines of this discovery—though overt behavior was temporarily lacking—it was not far to reach the conclusion that she was the kind of girl who, when alone with young men, would encourage them to address her by her Christian name on brief acquaintance and play fast and loose with the established conventions on the plea that they promoted social stiffness.

Mrs. Sumner had shuddered at the thought. It had been a source of constant self-congratulation that her own daughters had been guarded from the microbe of informality, which, in her opinion, was turning so many of the girls of the rising generation into mere boys—unromantic, athletic "good fellows."

The impression which she thus derived at the outset had served to confirm her maternal idea that Henry had had a fortunate escape; and though she was not blind to Miss Avery's surface attractions, she had chosen to think of the affair as a boy and girl episode which had blown over. Did not all the outward indications point to this? What she hoped was that they might become merely capital friends. With sentiment eliminated, Priscilla's rose-colored, if too positive, views would provide an excellent foil to Henry's relentless tendencies. So she had let matters drift. But Henry had seemed to avoid the topic.

She had begun to suspect the truth—that he did care—some time before the success of Electric Coke presented Priscilla in the new light of an heiress. Money of course was money; but Mrs. Sumner did not need or seek to exonerate herself from the imputation of sordid motives because of regarding her sister's companion with fresh interest. The interesting thing to her was not the possession, but the opportunity. What use would Priscilla make of all this wealth? Mrs. Sumner had at times pictured herself as inordinately rich and indulged in the spiritual luxury of a series of chimerical splendid donations. And now, here was a girl on the threshold of life, the only daughter of a man who had suddenly acquired a huge fortune, who could do just that if she saw fit—build a new dormitory for women under the shadow of Harvard College, buy an expensive old master for the Art Museum. And with this

girl her only son was in love—she would never believe hopelessly. Naturally she regarded her with a new eye. But as for the money itself—it would inevitably be a formidable barrier to Henry. As his mother she divined this the moment she heard that Priscilla had become an heiress. She realized the mental plight in which he must be assuming that he had never, in so many words, asked her to marry him before her father had acquired his fortune. Up to the time when the girl had given unmistakable signs that she was not going to fritter her life and money away on mere pleasureable excitements—was, in short, keenly alive to her opportunity, Mrs. Sumner had regarded this new barrier with equanimity. But one motive for leading up to the subject on this afternoon was that she might make sure that Henry was not eating his heart out in consequence of deeming it unsurmountable. Another was because she genuinely desired to do something by way of letting her son perceive that she had revised her first estimate of the woman he would like to marry. In this connection it was a satisfaction to her to be able to feel that some time before she had ever heard of Electric Coke she had begun to be drawn toward Miss Avery and to reconcile herself to the possibility of having her for a daughter-in-law.

Henry was silent for a moment, following his mother's proposal, then he replied: "Do you think she needs us? I'm sure she is not conscious of the need."

Mrs. Sumner, misinterpreting this lukewarm reception, said eagerly, "I am glad of the opportunity to tell you, dear boy, that your Priscilla has won me over completely." Thereupon she smiled benignly at her son.

Henry returned her smile. "I am glad, of course, that you have ceased to disapprove of her. What I meant,

though, mother, had nothing to do with that. As I said a few minutes ago, I don't think you realize how little we of the old order really count."

"But surely—" Mrs. Sumner paused. She wished to be circumspect, for she knew that Henry still harbored idiosyncrasies. "For instance, I made Mrs. Townsend promise to send her a card for the Puritan balls."

"That was considerate of you, but I doubt if Miss Avery will be alive to the greatness of the honor."

Mrs. Sumner was silent for a moment in her turn. "Then some one should enlighten her. She will be a distinct addition; for, besides being ornamental, it is evident that she intends to stand for something—to identify herself with social progress. Her idea of a club which should not condemn everything at the start was an inspiration, half truth though it was. And so we—I, at least, desire to recognize the fact."

"I give you *carte-blanche*, mother. But," he added, "how can you expect her to desert her friends for ours?"

Mrs. Sumner had evidently anticipated this objection, for she answered promptly, "Her father is an elderly man. He would scarcely expect to be invited at this period of his life for the first time, especially as her step-mother knows nobody."

"And her step-sister is to be deliberately excluded."

"Merely not invited. That is the decision of the committee, not mine. But have I not heard you constantly inveigh against the husband as an evil force in the community—all the more dangerous because he seems to possess unusual ability?"

"That is my opinion still. But Miss Avery does not agree with me. She admires everything her brother-in-law does; has complete confidence in him. She is certain to

side with them, and to feel that their friends are good enough for her. They will be invited to plenty of balls and dinner-parties."

"Ah, but they will not be the same," murmured Mrs. Sumner. "I was merely trying to help her—for your sake. Tell me, Henry—you speak of her formally as Miss Avery—are you at odds? Have you given up the idea of marrying her? I do not wish to probe."

"No, mother; I love her more than ever."

"Have you asked her recently?"

"There are certain things of which one is sure without asking. I haven't a chance of succeeding—at present. I am only too well aware of the fact."

Mrs. Sumner shook her head. "I believe you are too modest. You have a great deal to offer a girl like Miss Avery—position, character, intelligence, no bad habits."

"A Boston certificate of excellence. It does not happen to appeal to her. She yearns for something racier."

"Yearns? Racier? I do not understand you, Henry."

"She is haunted by the ideal of some one less cut and dried, less critically cold-blooded, less highly moral. Seriously, mother"—he stopped short at the street crossing facing the Art Museum—"maternal prepossessions eliminated, what is there about me to attract a high-spirited, girl with half a million to spend?"

"Less highly moral?" Then instantly recognizing that there was a surface truth in the accusation, she asserted quietly: "She ought to know you better by this time. As to the money, Henry, you wished to marry her before she had a penny. So it would be Utopian—yes, wrong, to let that separate you. As for high spirit—you possess the best spirit of all—public spirit; the willingness to stand up and fight for what you believe true and just and honorable

in the teeth of easy-going conventional opposition. That is the part of a real Chippendale—and a Sumner. I do not like to praise you to your face, but really, my son, your morbid point of view compels it."

"Miss Avery does not see me with your eyes, mother."

"They are the eyes of the public."

"Let us assume that she is prejudiced against me. I think she is a little. So much the worse for me."

"Then what do you intend to do?"

"To wait—to trust to time. To play the part of the persevering Boston man in the hope that some day——"

There was no need of supplying the elipsis; and Morgan Drake's phrase which rose to his lips—"she will fall into my arms with a dull, sickening thud"—would inevitably appear grotesque to his mother, who was apt to complain that the phraseology of the rising generation was lacking in reverence. "But we must not patronize her," he hastened to add.

"I surely have no wish to do that. But if there is any way in which you think I can help, you must not wait for me to divine it." Mrs. Sumner had ascertained the principal point which she wished to know—that he was still absorbed in Priscilla, and she was not disposed to take umbrage because he saw fit to distort her intentions. The important thing was to leave off where he could resume his confidences hereafter with no sense of constraint.

On Saturdays and Sundays admission to the Art Museum is free; on the other days an entrance fee is charged, except to the holders of season tickets—the certificate of an annual subscription of ten dollars. Mrs. Sumner had been an annual subscriber from the outset, and she had so thoroughly inoculated her children with her own loyalty that each of them regarded this claim on the purse as

paramount to all minor charities. They fastidiously but correctly argued that the less discerning—the many—would give to hospital, animal rescue and pure milk funds in preference to this great educational cause.

The door-keeper knew them well; it was never necessary to produce their tickets. But this was Saturday—a free day—and as they reached the narrow turnstile, a party of Italian laborers with their picturesque women had just preceded them. Mrs. Sumner smiled significantly at Henry as she relinquished her parasol to the custodian. To be able to witness the proletariat taking advantage of the opportunities for culture was the great compensation for not inspecting the new Rembrandt in stillness and isolation, as was their preference when passing judgment on a new work of art. Mrs. Sumner could never forbear to make a short tour of the cast rooms on the ground floor before ascending the staircase. She liked to refresh her mythological memory and to be brought face to face with the life-size reproductions of the great classical and Egyptian masterpieces. As she paused in front of Rameses the Second she put into words the thought which had been harassing her since her entrance.

"Why is it that our native working-people do not come here of their own free will—from a genuine love of it—like the foreigners? Shall we ever produce great art until our masses kindle with the instinct for beautiful things? I hate to confess it, Henry—but there are moments when I wonder if that day will ever come, and I ask myself whether a nation which is artistically barren—whose art has to be forced down its throat like medicine—can be truly great."

As she turned for the sympathy which she expected—yet desiring to be contradicted and to be assured that the attendance was more universal than she feared—she no-

ticed that Henry's gaze was fixed on the doorway as if it were following some one whom he knew.

"Who was that? Remember that I wish to see Mr. Moore."

"It was not he, mother. I suppose the answer is"— he spoke a little like one who felt suddenly impelled to stand up for his country—"that we cannot expect to live down the Puritan lack of imagination in a single century. Besides, is not great art wont to follow in the wake of great prosperity? As a nation we have been comparatively poor until the last thirty years. Now that a Macænas is becoming possible in every city, we may have great masters."

Mrs. Sumner shook her head doubtfully. "The Puritans had imagination—think of the 'Scarlet Letter.' And it required imagination for those marvellous inventions—the cotton gin, the sewing-machine, the telephone—yes, even for our superior plumbing. But art"—she sighed as she spoke—"art is different. We must try to be grateful, I suppose, for our past, for our Stuarts and our Copleys, and hope for the best. It may not be too soon even to hold our breath and think of both Sargent and St. Gaudens as geniuses. But what you said reminds me; Mrs. Townsend also stated that the name of the anonymous donor of the new Rembrandt has leaked out; it is Mr. Blaisdell."

"We might have guessed so. And he has made George Burton the fashion by buying two of his pictures. Then it was she," he added to himself.

They had completed their survey of the cast rooms as they talked and were now on the large staircase. As she finished her speech, Mrs. Sumner paused reverently, as one might stop at a shrine, to look up at the (headless) Winged Samothracean Victory which seemed to hover superbly above them. Then they passed on to the gal-

leries, lingering for a moment to glance appreciatively at this or that favorite, and yet pursuing a definite course toward their goal. Mrs. Sumner never beheld without disfavor the vast canvas by Copley which depicts a huge shark turning on its side in the act of seizing a boy. Her æsthetic sensibilities were offended both by its bulk and by its theme. On this occasion, as was her habit, she sailed by, looking straight before her, although the group of Italians which she had previously noticed was studying the picture attentively. In a few moments more she and Henry were standing before the new Rembrandt. It was the portrait of a full-faced Dutch burgher with deep-set eyes and dew-lap cheeks and a slight curl to his mustaches which gave almost an air of sprightliness to his otherwise strictly commercial countenance.

There were several other people in the room, but, fortunately for their purpose, no one else was before the picture at the moment, so that they had the satisfaction of gazing at it unreservedly in complete silence. Mrs. Sumner was the first to break this.

"It's an original; I suppose there can be no doubt of that. That's one comfort. The face looks out at us as if it would speak—and after all these years. One can't deny that it's fine—technically, very fine."

"It's superb," said Henry. He was surprised at his own vehemence, which he was already conscious was partly the result of a determination not to discover defects if possible.

"Yes, artistically, it's satisfying," Mrs. Sumner answered slowly, "but ethically I feel a lack. Compare a face like that with Emerson's, for instance. It is deficient in soul. I ask the question—I admit that it is debatable—can any work of art be considered great—satisfying in the highest sense—into which the spiritual quality does not enter?"

"Ah, mother, mother, I was trying to stifle the same thought. We seem fated to be eternally searching for the moral in whatever we see and hear."

The agitation in Henry's voice aroused his serene mother's wonder. She stared at him, more than ever convinced that he was over-wrought; but before she could speak and point out that such a vision had its compensations, they both became aware that they were no longer alone. A graceful, animated young woman was smiling on them—a young woman whose brisk, gracious approach seemed unmistakably modern to Mrs. Sumner, yet affected her pleasantly like a west wind, and in whom at a second glance, she recognized her son's Priscilla—Priscilla arrayed in all the faultless witchery of the latest fashion.

"What do you think of the new Rembrandt? This is my second visit. I promised my brother-in-law to tell him this time if I am satisfied with the frame. He thinks it should be more ornamental."

Mrs. Sumner raised her lorgnette on its flowing chain. "I had not observed the frame. It is very well, I think. As to the portrait, we were admiring it—but Henry more than I. I am transcendental enough to feel the need of an ethical quality to awaken my enthusiasm. It is life-like, undeniably, but when we stop to think, what an essentially stolid countenance."

"But they were like that"—responded Priscilla—"just like that, stolid, fat, unimpressionable, if you will. There's the marvellous skill—the power to fix those very qualities so that the canvas seems about to breathe."

Mrs. Sumner nodded. "I admit all that; nor do I deny that the art is consummate—of its kind. They were like that. But," she added in her gentle voice, "they ought not to have been."

Priscilla listened in amazement. The disparaging words which fell like trickling water on her enthusiasm were such a surprise that her first impulse was toward mirth. Yet in the next breath she realized that it had been dampened. Then as she looked again at the portrait with the eyes of one conscious of having received a quiet rebuke, she understood in a flash the point of view—wonderful as it still appeared to her. Stranger still, she found herself for a moment under the spell of it—the mild but relentless seeking for perfection of this faded but stately lady—his mother. His mother—and how exactly like him! There was the source—the fountain-head of his censorious spirit. Yet with this distinction: the quality which in him had always tended to arouse her antagonism appeared in the other a subtle grace, like old lace or china—the savor of a soul naïvely true to itself. Instinctively she looked from mother to son, comparing them.

"And is that the impression the portrait produces on you, Mr. Sumner?" she asked, as one in a reverie.

Henry noticed the absence of contradiction from her voice. Addressed to an ardent admirer of the donor, must not his mother's criticism seem bald, almost ungracious? Yet when he looked Priscilla in the eye, he forbore to shirk the truth, though he flushed at the necessity.

"There's no use in my pretending; I'm just the same. That's the thing we look for—demand—the symbol, the ethical meaning. We're made that way; it's a limitation, I suppose. It makes us too blind to the technical beauties. We fail to bestow due emphasis of praise on the painter's gift."

For the first time in her experience Priscilla thought him humble. Instead of interrupting she waited for him to go on.

"You approach a picture like this in an entirely different spirit—I know you well enough for that, Miss Avery. You don't knit your brows searching for the things—eternal verities—which are not there. You rejoice in what you actually behold—the superb color, the masterly delineation, the convincing reproduction of a picturesque past. You sympathize with the dead artist—are grateful for—envy him. Unlike my mother and me, you do not turn your microscope upon his soul and judge him pitilessly by its shortcomings. But we—we cannot help it."

It was the light of interest, the lack of scorn in her expression which encouraged him to set forth the antithesis and led him to a genial close. As he finished he turned playfully toward his mother, inviting corroboration.

Gratified as she was that he had remained faithful to his ideals, Mrs. Sumner instinctively shrank from the semblance of exaggeration.

"Microscopes? If you are not careful, Henry, you will give Miss Avery the impression that we approach art merely from the standpoint of entomologists."

Priscilla shook her head. "I have been virtually a Bostonian all my life—but I think I may be just beginning to understand what that really means."

Mrs. Sumner looked relieved and appreciative. "It means so many different things, my dear." She paused a moment. "May I not," she added, "call you Priscilla? We have met so frequently at my sister's—you are such an old friend of my son's, and—and I have observed that you are interesting yourself in the things in which we are interested."

"I wish you would, Mrs. Sumner." Priscilla spoke radiantly, notwithstanding her sense of humor told her that she was being admitted to Boston's inner circle and that it

was her duty to regard this as a complimentary and precious privilege. Then she turned on Henry a glance made up of triumph and raillery. She would fain have swept him a low courtesy.

Their eyes met. It was revealed to both of them that, through this delightful intermediary, they had suddenly for the first time in their intercourse reached a footing of amiability, or at least of mutual forbearance.

"And perhaps, Mr. Sumner, the eternal verities demand a certain type of frame."

The gaiety of her smile disarmed her satire. But before he could answer, the pleased yet tense ejaculation of Mrs. Sumner revealed the presence of Mr. Moore of the Museum staff, an inscrutable looking young man with a short blonde beard, who had approached them unperceived.

"Why, Mr. Moore, you are just the person I was hoping to see. To begin with—assuming that it is a Rembrandt, and I suppose, of course, it is—I wish to hear your candid opinion of its merits."

In another moment the two were absorbed in contemplation of the portrait—Mr. Moore with wrinkled brow and his head a little on one side, she gazing wistfully and searchingly through her lorgnette—so that the others found themselves apart.

"I would leave the frame as it is. To be able to make a royal gift like this must be an immense pleasure," said Henry, moved to cater to the satisfaction which he felt sure she must be experiencing from the knowledge that Blaisdell was the generous donor.

"I was in the secret. My brother-in-law confided in me. It cost—ever so much. Yes, it must be an immense pleasure. I used to think that money—a lot of it—didn't matter much; that one could be just as happy on very

little. So one can, of course. But, as you suggest, it must add enormously to the enjoyment of life to be able to enrich a place like this—to see one of the treasures of the world, ask the price and say, 'I'll take it,' just as if it were a spool of thread or a skein of sewing-silk. It must be entrancing."

Her dark eyes sparkled under the spell of her vision. She looked about her as if desiring to re-examine her surroundings. "What an interesting place this it! I must come here oftener. I ought to know every corner of it, but things have changed since I was an art student—and discovered that I was not a genius. It was a bitter discovery, but I did discover it in time. And now"— (obviously it was her theme that interested her, but, poor worm though he might be, it seemed a triumph to Henry that she no longer glowered at him)—"perhaps I may be able to help a little; contribute my share toward buying beautiful things for the Museum. I dare say you know that my father's invention has proved a great success; that we are no longer poor." She made the announcement with frank simplicity.

"Every one has heard of Electric Coke."

"Yet I was one of the last persons to believe in it. That was a bitter discovery, too—to find that I had been so slow in realizing that my father was a genius. Now we are to have a new house. I am to live with them—it was all decided yesterday—on Commonwealth Avenue, not far from Lora's. So I seemed fated to go back, if only to make some amends as a dutiful daughter for having failed to appreciate him."

Could he believe his ears? She was looking brightly straight at him—yes, this was clearly personal—as if to enjoin upon him not to fail to notice her confession of falli-

bility. Evidently it had been dwelt upon for his special benefit. Then Henry heard her say:

"It was very nice of your mother to suggest calling me by my Christian name."

Was not this a veritable peace offering? Nay, more. Rather a goblet brimming with happiness suddenly held out for him to quaff by the living presence of the angel of his earthly hopes. With trembling hands—for his awkwardness was not proof against such a delicious surprise—Henry was in the act of raising it to his lips when suddenly it was ruthlessly snatched away and only the echo of her mirth was left. For this was what she demurely added:

"Was it not a sort of reward for being interested in the things in which she is interested?"

Henry flushed and glanced instinctively at his mother. Plainly she was not listening; but was still engrossed by Mr. Moore and the immediate burning question of the new Rembrandt. The taunt was audacious, the taunt was pitiless; but it was arch and not disdainful. The living presence of the angel of his earthly hopes was smiling at him, but not in scorn. His first thought was one of gratitude that his mother had not overheard—for she would never have understood; his second one of satisfaction that, though badly upset, he did understand, and that for once in his social career he was about to prove adequate to the occasion.

"To tell the truth, I think it was, Miss Avery," he answered.

"I felt sure of it."

Her manifest enjoyment was a rich reward for his penetration—his bold capacity to take a joke, though it might be akin to laughing in church. Henry felt like a knight

who has at last won his spurs. Yet he hastened to assert:

"But my mother admires you immensely—that was the real reason. She admires you and—er—she approves of you; and my mother's approval is not easy to win." He felt it incumbent on him to vindicate the maternal dignity, even though his ladylove should make light of the sincere compliment.

This time Priscilla did sweep him a courtesy, but it simply was gracious.

"Easier to win than her son's, however."

"You know——"

The syncope of confusion cut off Henry's protesting thought, so that she had time to spare herself and him. She felt that the time had come to go, and she had been made aware by the movement of Mrs. Sumner's lorgnette that the latter had detected the courtesy and been subconsciously reminded of her presence.

"It will be difficult to convince me of that. There are certain convictions of mine—my most cherished ones—which remain unaltered. Yes, I must be going. Let me slip away so as not to interrupt Mrs. Sumner's argument."

Henry's eager impulse was to accompany her. Again he glanced at his mother—piteously this time, for he already realized that he could not go. It had been his sister on the other occasion; for there was just enough parallel in the situation to recall the hideous past. Somehow his duty to his relations was perpetually blocking the pathway of his romantic affections. He flushed at the suspicion that Priscilla remembered. Did not her saucy, splendid mien indicate that she was rejoicing in his plight, and passing judgment on him again because he lingered? But what could he do?

Then suddenly to his relief, and yet to his infinite embarrassment she declared, "Of course you cannot desert your mother." To have his secret thoughts plucked out and exultantly, roguishly exhibited was mortifying and likewise paralyzing to the faculties. But, though there was a twinkle in her eye, at least she exonerated him. So much was clear to his agitated vision; consequently he was spurred to exclaim, to forestall the possibility of the slightest doubt:

"But you surely realize that I would much prefer to go with you."

The platitude—emphasizing his conscientious reluctance to leave anything to the imagination—was one of those dire speeches which Priscilla had learned to expect. She was dimly aware that she had become hardened to them in that she had ceased to jump away as from an electric shock. But she was moved to shake her head resolutely, willing that he should be left in doubt by this dumb show whether she was not secretly displeased by his filial conduct. She intended thereby also to reiterate the adamantine conviction which she had just uttered, that she could never hope to win his approbation. Continuing, she said explicitly:

"We have disagreed again, as usual, about the picture. Though, as you remarked," she added after a moment's pause, "it seems this time to be your misfortune rather than your fault."

This qualification of a statement designed to inform him plainly that he was not to deduce from her milder manner and her self-reproach anything but wholesale discouragement of any starveling personal hope seemed to her eminently harmless—a sort of laying on destiny the blame which she had hitherto ascribed to more deliberate proc-

esses. He was welcome to derive heart comfort from it if he could. Accordingly she felt justified in showing her amiability again to the extent of saying:

"So, if you choose, you may come and see me—at the new house. But we don't move in for two months yet."

Was not this the refinement of cruelty? Such was Priscilla's not altogether mournful reflection after she had fixed the postponement, the need of which had come to her as an afterthought. As she looked at Henry, he reminded her of a hungry—yes, a faithful and well-meaning—dog on his hind legs, watching for scraps which she dangled before his nose, and just when he thought one of them was his, jerked away. She felt almost like stroking him. But if she were to do so, would he not be certain to bite her in his clumsy efforts to lick her hand?

The simile amused Priscilla by its aptness. Evidently she had puzzled him so completely by her alternate methods that he was absorbed in studying her lips. She had meant to go at once, and yet now that she dallied, she remembered that there was something at the back of her mind which she had intended to say. She would say it now—whatever construction he might choose to put on her words.

She hesitated a moment before beginning—which was unusual with her. "I'm really going—but it may edify you, Mr. Sumner, to hear one thing more. Your mother was right; somehow or other—I don't know how—I have become interested in the things in which she is interested. For instance, I might, under my new circumstances, have chosen to travel abroad indefinitely, be a brilliant social success, or marry a foreign title—do all sorts of interesting things." She spoke a little airily as if illustrations were as

plenty as blackberries. "But what do you think? Instead, I am about to settle down to a humdrum life as a confirmed Bostonian, the scope of which must sooner or later include the Associated Charities—the protection of the Common —and—er—a tomb at Mt. Auburn. In short, I am interested in local monuments—these and others. There's another confession—admission—whatever you choose to call it, Mr. Sumner."

Priscilla paused in her vagary, for this was all she had intended to say. Yet uttered it seemed to demand some justification of a kind adapted to confound the bewildered yet manifestly gratified approval of the faithful dog. "This being the case, it appears to me highly probable—inevitable, in fact—that our ideas concerning these sacred institutions—I agree with you that they are sacred—will clash. We have never agreed yet. I intend—yes, I intend to dispute with you the control of these symbols of power in the hope that the New England conscience may be eliminated from the face of the earth."

She was gone. Even the faultless swirl of her retreating skirt suggested energy and grace. It was his mother's voice which recalled the triumphant yet nonplussed Henry to himself.

"She is a sweet girl and charmingly dressed, but what was that she said about the New England conscience? It is the fashion to disparage it—as if there were much left nowadays. But if the pendulum swings much further toward general tolerance of everything under the sun, we shall be wishing some of the old intolerance back."

"It was merely that she was a little irritated at finding that she has one herself," answered Henry with pensive delight. Presently, while he and Mrs. Sumner retraced

their steps through the galleries he joyfully chanted to himself these lines from his favorite Emerson:

"Heartily know
When half-Gods go
The Gods arrive."

CHAPTER XIV

His wife's remark that he had discarded the ambition to become President often recurred to Blaisdell. Was it not just like the shrewd little woman to discern it? In the lexicon of youth this had been his text—the crowning possibility of a successful career, dazzling but not beyond the reach of his capabilities. Now he could contemplate the high office without blinking.

This did not mean that he would not accept the position if it were offered to him. Any patriotic American would, of course. Politically, it was the highest position on earth. But it never would be offered to him for the excellent reason that, on arriving at the parting of the ways, he had deliberately chosen between that leading to the White House and one which led to something better. He had no ambition to be President just as analogously he would positively decline to be Mayor of Boston, or to fill any office in the gift of the people. The power which he was on the high road to attain was much more complete, much more subtle, and, popular cant to the contrary notwithstanding, much more enviable.

There had been a time, of course, when public office was the great avenue to fame and usefulness as an American. He knew himself still to be second to none in his

political enthusiasm—in his fervent belief that the institutions of his native country were tending to produce a higher type of civilization than any which had hitherto existed; and incidentally a new and superior type of rulers. Human society which had been governed successively by demi-gods, emperors, priests, doges, warriors and constitutional statesmen was now under the sway of the money market, a current euphemism which to the initiated was a patent of nobility eighteen carat fine.

To the initiated, for not every one was shrewd enough to recognize this, and more who, through prejudice or what they termed principle, refused to open their eyes to it. Although the clergy and the demagogues still comforted the mass with the delusion that humble means was a blessing both as a life estate and as a future spiritual asset, was not the secret desire of every level-headed man in the United States to make a fortune? In whom did the public evince a keener interest, though they might seek to disguise it by newspaper abuse, than in the few who, by superior intelligence, had managed to accumulate many millions in a lifetime? These were the uncrowned kings—the legitimate, lineal product of untrammelled democracy. The money power had come to its own at last, no longer to be robbed and brow-beaten by priests or by princes, no longer to be sneered at with impunity by inferior types of brain. "A nation of shopkeepers" had ceased to be a term of opprobrium. Out of the retail store had grown the partnership; out of the partnership the emporium; out of the emporium, the corporation with branches stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific; and thence had sprung, through the fertile imagination of this or that master mind, those various combinations of capital which, either in the form of trusts or of indi-

vidual proprietorship, had revolutionized in a single generation the financial methods of the world.

Read along the printed page this may sound metallic even against the sounding-board of democracy. But spoken with the confident good humor and clear-headed enthusiasm of which Blaisdell was capable, it lost the ring of mere materialism—for he not only had a winning way, but had thought things out, and had reassuring answers for those in search of ideals. For instance, against those who believed in socialism—the elimination of competition from human affairs—the taunt might well be brought that the imagination was liable to be starved in the model tenement of dead-level mediocrity. The tastes of the modern ruler were not to be ascetic or humdrum, but adapted to preserve the traditions of all previous aristocracies; and, while cherishing unswerving common-sense and fostering vitality, to surpass them in splendor and enlightenment. Briefly, democracy in the saddle—Blaisdell liked to think of himself as a self-made man—was to be robust, generous, hopeful, enterprising, slow to cavil, patriotic and far-seeing. It was to be clear cut and energetic in its mental processes, not visionary and hair-splitting. It was first of all to be healthy-minded. He had heard the phrase somewhere and appropriated it as the keynote of his philosophy of life. The successful American of the new order was to be a whole-souled, pleasant-spoken individual, and also a picturesque one. Not picturesque in his appearance necessarily. His apparel was to be sober as formerly—save for white flannel relaxation in summer—but picturesque in his domestic surroundings. There were to be no palaces in name, but more than palaces in comfort, spaciousness and magnificence. And not only were his apartments to be on a large scale with plenty of

air to breathe and a separate bath-room for everybody—the externals of life—but there was to be nothing cramped in his spiritual outlook.

Applying this locally—for all of us in the end obtain from our environment the best material for our philosophic yardsticks—Blaisdell suddenly found himself in the possession of definite convictions regarding Boston. Not having had time to philosophize, he had accepted Boston at first as a fact and made the city serve his purpose without inquiring closely into cause and effect. But now a millionaire at thirty-five he good-humoredly deplored that Boston was behind the times, that Boston was too self-conscious, and as a result of these failings that Boston sentimentally preferred the narrow ruts worn by puritanic and provincial custom to the macadamized avenues of cosmopolitan urbanity. Moreover, he had every intention (he flattered himself that he had done much in this direction already) of trying to correct these shortcomings. As regards the first of them, he saw signs that the business men were beginning to realize there was danger the city would be sidetracked and that, unless she bestirred herself, Boston must inevitably cease to be the "hub" of the universe and end by performing that function for the lumbering vehicle familiarly known as an ice-cart. To this contemporary satire of the cheery kind he felt that heed was being paid. But the other shortcoming—the narrow self-consciousness—was more elusive. It was not peculiar to trade methods, but was characteristic of everything which was said and done in Boston. In short, it was a social defect, and as such to be reached only by social remedies.

But here he had a wife to help him; a wife who divined even more shrewdly than he the deficiencies and the opportunity. He had ignored social life as such from force

of circumstances, but fortunately she had not. Indisputably a modern industrial magnate would be handicapped by a retiring, hard-featured or unsophisticated wife. Lora did not need to be urged; on the contrary, she cleverly anticipated his sumptuous purposes. Did not Boston—that element which prided itself on its exclusiveness and aspired to set an ethical example to the rest of the world—still hang back from large and luxurious social effects as inconsistent with what it termed character? Did it not persistently spoil its own enjoyment, like a valetudinarian feeling his pulse, by remembering that scarcely more than fifty years ago the Brook Farm experiment was in full operation as a lesson in ideal community life? Consequently he was only too ready to shock these good people and at the same time demonstrate by successive ornate innovations that in cherishing their tepid conceptions of enjoyment they had missed and still continued to miss half the zest of existence. But he wished his manifestations to be free from the slightest reproach of vulgarity—in excellent taste as well as princely—and for this he relied on Lora's intuitions to supplement his own free-handed impulses. In other words, he longed to see a new aristocracy of large-hearted and spontaneous emotions turn to confound the strait-laced, frigid and picayune standards of the moribund yet complacent society which claimed the right to examine his wife's credentials.

After he had acquired sufficient breathing space by knocking the two houses on Commonwealth Avenue into one, there was a variety of other little things to do—things at which the thorough-going Bostonian would look askance until some one set him the example. To provide his stable with stylish equipages and innumerable horses, including blooded stock for exhibition at fashionable horse shows;

to purchase a farm in the suburbs from which fresh vegetables, cream and flowers could be forwarded daily in profusion; to engage a house secretary and stenographer for his wife; to buy a steam yacht and a share in a salmon river; to have both their portraits painted by a foreign artist—these were a few of what might be called the immediate incidentals. Although they were merely what the wealthy in foreign countries were accustomed to have, he was conscious that people were peeping at him from behind their Beacon Street houses and wondering what he would do next. This amused and spurred him on. By means of superintendents—higher priced and more discerning factotums than mere underlings—he aimed to excel splendidly in everything he undertook. In a single season his horses captured nearly every blue ribbon at the local competitions, his dogs and his roses took first prizes, and his racing thirty-footer won the Transatlantic cup against all comers.

On Sunday morning it was Blaisdell's habit to take an account of stock, as he termed it; ascertain how he stood not merely in dollars and cents, but sociologically. Occasionally he accompanied Lora to the Episcopal Church (they owned one of the most expensive pews), just to show that he approved of religion as an institution. The remaining Sunday mornings he would pass in his library, or, if the weather were fine, in visiting his outlying greenhouses, farm or stables, and cogitate. He was well aware that the conservative latter-day Bostonian did not believe half of what he heard at church and went mournfully in order to criticise the sermon. Why not have the courage of one's convictions and stay away? But when he did go, Blaisdell preferred a fervent spiritual discourse to a moral lecture. Religion was essential to the

masses and it did no harm to any man to listen now and then to an eloquent clergyman. It would not be wise for the modern magnate to proclaim his inmost convictions on religion any more than it would to state openly his private opinion on many subjects. In his secret soul, for instance, he sympathized heartily with the utterance of the late William H. Vanderbilt, "the public be damned"; it pleased him anew whenever he thought of it. In his actual dealing with reporters, however, butter would not melt in his mouth.

Similarly, although he knew the catchword, "the plain people," to be merely a synonym for certain political highwaymen waiting to be bribed, to say so would bring the whole legislature like a hornet's nest about his ears. An indignant press would expostulate, whitewashing resolutions would be passed with an apostrophe to the white-robed goddess, and what would be the upshot? Simply that he would make himself unpopular and accomplish nothing. For what did he employ a special legislative clerk except to deal with these gentry? No, in Boston—as in other American cities where people were busy and had numerous axes to grind—in order to be effective one must speak pleasantly or, at least, temperately of everybody and everything, and pat all men genially on the back in the hope of being patted in return. It behooved a modern magnate to cultivate an atmosphere of continuous social sunshine. If he were censorious or unaccommodating, vital measures might be held up indefinitely by the plain people and great public improvements be frustrated. Therefore, as a large owner of stock in several Boston newspapers, he approved of the euphemistic temper of the local press from which irony was utterly excluded as an enemy to democracy and circula-

tion. If any one were to purloin a hundred thousand dollars in broad daylight on the Common, who could justly complain if it were caustically stigmatized as a "misappropriation"? But the more comfortable, yes, Christian custom was to avoid censure and to throw little "bouquets" in type at everybody on the smallest excuse, and thus make all leading citizens happy at least once a year by newspaper titillations.

These private reflections Blaisdell kept to himself in his capacity as leading citizen and capitalist. They appealed to his sense of humor somewhat and yet only faintly, for he had no desire to be a spoil sport. Live and let live struck him as, on the whole, a felicitous motto for democracy to bear in mind, and he desired that the existing era of good feeling should last his lifetime. Wars—the great enemies of magnates—might not cease for a century or two, but it was something that every one from the Mayor to the saleslady should be joining hands in the social merry-go-round of mutual forbearance and accumulation. The only people who annoyed him were those who held aloof coldly and disdainfully with their noses in the air. Whenever these people tried to prove anything—the inquiry invariably proved a fizzle, and as to their objections—they were chiefly moonshine. Fortunately (and yet even up to this point Blaisdell's sense of triumph was essentially amiable) he was now in a position to challenge those who prided themselves on their superior philosophy. As a director in more corporations of one sort and another than any man in Boston, as the owner of large blocks of local securities organized under his leadership—gas, electric light and street railway companies—as the holder of stock in railroads, mines, patent rights and manufacturing industries in various parts of the country—he was

certainly a person to be reckoned with in his native city. Already he was, in a commercial sense, hand-in-glove with the large men in New York and Chicago, and in a position to feel the undercurrents of high finance, while the smaller fry were still beguiled by surface appearances. Barring some unforeseen disaster, he would, at the present rate of increase, be a very rich man at the end of ten years, without taking into account Electric Coke—and Electric Coke was an unqualified success.

This stock was selling at 185 *ex* "rights" worth twenty-five dollars a share. It had proved itself a bonanza already, and he was watching the business closely in confident faith that the present price would some day seem very low. Of the 70,000 shares now issued, 12,000 stood in his firm's name, which, with Mr. Avery's 16,000 shares, was not far short of a controlling interest. His firm's original investment had been 5,000 shares. He had added to this by quietly picking up stock in the open market on all recessions and by recent purchases of "rights"—some of them his step-father-in-law's—for it had seemed wise to Mr. Avery to realize a portion of his profits in this way to pay for his new house and avoid having all his eggs in one basket. Of the other holders, Langdon & Co. and their following, were by far the largest and the most tenacious. Blaisdell had tried various ruses to induce them to reduce their holdings, but rumors of patent litigation and rival discoveries had failed to dislodge any appreciable amount of their stock. Moreover, his chief competitor in the purchase of the "rights" lately on the market had been a broker on the floor of the exchange who sometimes made secret purchases for that firm, and Blaisdell had been informed that Chauncey Chippendale, whose wedding to General Langdon's daughter had lately taken place, had signalized his ad-

mission to partnership by announcing himself as a rampant "bull for a long pull on Electric Coke." To be sure, the market position of the stock was much strengthened by this rivalry, but Blaisdell was one who looked askance at disputed mastery. If Electric Coke were going to be worth five hundred dollars a share, it was his purpose to control its finances. Moreover, was it not far more likely to be worth that price, if he did? But this was a matter of future consideration. For the moment the current market price and his own large ownership were the brightest feathers in the cap of his Sunday morning cogitations. To conclude, he had been accorded several public tokens of his growing civic importance. One mayor had invited him to become a Sinking Fund Commissioner, the next had requested him to serve as one of the trustees of the new Public Library. Both of these honorable positions without pay he had felt obliged to decline "on account of the magnitude of his other interests."

But for the social side he relied on Lora. One evening, about a year after they had moved into their new house, she left the piano and sitting on the arm of his chair pressed down his newspaper.

"Listen to the calendar of an ambitious woman: January, balls and dances. February, musicales and receptions." As she proceeded, she ticked the months off on her fingers, pausing archly when temporarily at a loss. "March, Lent and dinners. April, the Opera. May, the Horse Show and the Dog Show. June, the Country Club races. July and August, Europe. September, house parties. October, shopping and theatres in New York. November, Thanksgiving and dressmakers. December, the first ball of the season and getting ready for Christmas. You see what's in store for you, Hugh. That's

what is expected of us now that we've moved to town. And you can't say that I didn't warn you. I always told you that I was socially ambitious, and wished to live on the sunny side of Commonwealth Avenue."

"You certainly did. And here we are."

Lora sighed. "Oh, yes. But it may not be quite so easy as I expected; making just the friends we wish, I mean."

Blaisdell laughed sceptically. He fancied her dazzled by her new surroundings and ascribed her passing melancholy to the dread of not being able to compete with their wealthy neighbors. "Don't let that trouble you," he replied. "I know you're a thrifty little soul, and so there's no danger in saying to you, as it might be to some women, if there's anything which you think we ought to have or do—buy it, do it. Don't let money stand in the way. I've plenty, I guess, for any wild extravagances you may be tempted to commit in Boston. Don't stint yourself, little woman."

"Thank you, Hugh." She stooped and kissed his broad forehead, from which the hair had begun to recede. She saw that he had not divined her lurking doubt, but at any rate he had provided her with the means of convincing herself how groundless it had been. People could not help noticing her, for she would attract their attention.

Lora had adhered faithfully to her calendar. Any deviations were in the line of extra activity. After their gorgeous ball for Priscilla, she was thrilled with delight for the time being because so many people came. Later she found herself wondering why so many others had stayed away. She let slip no opportunity to rivet the gaze of the social world. Her toilettes were lavishly exquisite, her jewels superb. Theirs was the highest premium paid for

seats at the symphony concerts; their season tickets for the opera were the most desirable in the house; besides carrying all before them in blue ribbons at the horse show, her box was the most conspicuous and consistently occupied of any; and they arrived with a party of friends on the scene of the Country Club races in a new coach drawn by four prancing prize animals.

Meanwhile their circle of acquaintance was constantly widening. Delano, Blaisdell's partner, was of great assistance at first. Knowing theatrical people was Delano's hobby, and what was called polite society bored him. His idea of enjoyment was to frequent the play, and, having exchanged signals of recognition across the foot-lights with theatrical stars, entertain them at supper after the curtain fell. Mrs. Delano humored her nervous, ferret-eyed husband in this; accordingly their large house—also a new one—was a Sunday evening resort for actors and actresses and for devotees and Bohemian patrons of all the arts.

"It was I who started those informal evenings in Boston—Saturdays, not Sundays—and I was really the one to continue them." Such was Mrs. Avery's plaint on her way to the first of Mrs. Delano's evenings which she attended. She had felt some compunctions on the score of desecrating the Sabbath, but her son-in-law had convinced her that Sunday evenings in Boston were needlessly dull. After arriving she was sure that she ought to go home. But the fascination of actually beholding women smoke held her spell-bound. Her hostess has stolen her thunder with a vengeance. What a wide departure from angel cake and ice cream, from lemonade and beer, from anything one happened to have on (for the men), and a simple toilette for the women to this Parisian affair! Her stigmatizing adjec-

tive was solely because of the few elegantly dressed daredevils in conscious attitudes with cigarettes between their lips or poised, advertising their freedom. On Sunday, too. Mrs. Avery could scarcely keep her eyes off them, and, conscious of being red from excitement, she fanned herself vigorously. She believed herself a Bohemian by temperament, she was accustomed to a social atmosphere of smoke, but smoke emanating from one sex. What would the Puritan fathers say? This was a mere involuntary mental ejaculation while trying to find her bearings. She was repelled, yet fascinated. Will the coming American woman smoke? She had heard the question recently debated at her Woman's Club and decided confidently in the negative. Now she was not quite so sure; for was not this an up-to-date house? She sighed and stole another look at two of the most fashionable younger women, when suddenly her glance fell on Lora—her little Lora—in the act of puffing a cigarette.

Mrs. Avery's impulse was to stride across the room, snatch the defiling weed from her daughter's lips and trample it under foot. But how could she? Such a proceeding in this company was out of the question. It would undo them socially. She grew redder still and plied her fan assiduously, trying to nerve herself for some defiant action. When at last they were in the carriage, she covered her face with her white, gloved hands, to the peril of her diamond sun-burst, and began to weep.

"How could you, Lora?"

"I only smoked one, mama. Besides, it's the thing to do, if one wishes to get on."

"Do you mean to tell me that American women—Boston women—are going to justify smoking?"

"If it happens to suit them—if they feel like it. Just as

they do in Venice and Paris and London. Some will and some won't. It will be just as the individual woman chooses. I haven't smoked for years; but Priscilla and I tried it once in Dartmouth Street after you had gone to bed, and we both agreed that we might take it up some day."

"Thank heavens, I'm old-fashioned. But I shall never get used to it—never."

"Oh, yes, you will, mama. Didn't I do it daintily?"

Mrs. Avery's tears welled up again at the recollection. "I turned my head away—I couldn't bear to look at you. But the others—the others were odious. I do not believe, Lora, that Hugh will approve of this."

"I shall tell him at once. If I explain to him that it will help me to make friends, he won't care. Hugh is always sensible."

Blaisdell was in New York on business over Sunday. On the evening of his return, Lora chose a cigarette from the large silver box on the library table and revealed her new accomplishment. He watched her with an amused air—supposing it to be a tricksy experiment beside the domestic hearth. But she showed herself undismayed by the smoke and jauntily invited him to tell her how to blow rings. He, too, had taken for granted that the American woman—his mother—his sister, if he had one—would never smoke. But he merely smiled at her audacity and waited for the delayed explanation.

"So many women do nowadays. At the Delano's I saw Mrs. Homer Ward, Mrs. George Mayberry and several others. So I just thought I'd be in the new fashion."

At this point Lora began to cough violently, for the smoke had stuck in her throat. The names which she had mentioned were those of two women who went everywhere in

Boston. The tears were in her laughing eyes, but she was glad to observe, as she struggled to recover her dignity as a smoker, that her husband's judgment was suspended. She hastened to strengthen her argument by recalling his own words.

"It's one of the things I ought to do, Hugh. Smart women smoke in all the capitals of Europe. It's sociable to do what other women in society are doing."

"Provided you like it." It was of the essence of healthy mindedness not to do things unless one enjoyed them. But assuming a woman did like it, presumably the modern wife of a modern magnate should be free to include the moderate use of Turkish tobacco in her social outfit. If any one had asked him the question the day before, he would have shaken his head decisively, but the personal equation put the matter in a new light.

"Of course I like it well enough. And—and I like to shock the people who don't smoke. That coughing was just an accident."

"I never in my life saw a woman smoke before you lighted that cigarette; but I am not going to put my foot down and say you shan't, for I can see that it's just one of those things which a fond husband must let his wife—his emancipated wife—decide for herself. So puff away, little woman, if you enjoy it, or think you ought to do it." But, having issued this broad license, Blaisdell suddenly asked, "Does Priscilla smoke?"

Lora read into his voice that he had qualified his permission by a reference to her step-sister as an arbiter.

"Priscilla has smoked; I've seen her," she exclaimed. A moment later she added deliberately, "That was years ago. Very likely she wouldn't now. But I really don't see what that has to do with my smoking."

"I was merely wondering," answered Blaisdell. The inquiry which had come to him as an after-thought interested him and made him deaf to his wife's petulance. In spite of his former prejudice, he realized that Lora looked entertainingly bewitching as she toyed with her cigarette, but that it would not suit Priscilla's style.

Lora was not long in perceiving that the Delanos did not entertain the people whom she most desired to know. She met there the Bohemian, artistic world, and ultra fashionable women like Mrs. Homer Ward and Mrs. George Mayberry, who yearned for social variety and dropped in now and then for an hour or so in order to be diverted on Sunday. She said one evening at Mrs. Delano's to Morgan Drake out of a clear sky: "Why is it that the other people don't come here?"

Morgan was not phased by the ambiguity of the term, but answered promptly:

"Meaning thereby the highly respectable, eminently hide-bound, elegantly correct element of society?"

"I suppose so. Any of the Chippendale connection—or the Langdons—or Mrs. Staunton Townsend, for instance."

"I doubt if Mrs. Delano knows them to begin with." Perhaps Morgan divined what was working in her mind.

"Why shouldn't she know them? I'm certain she told me that she had sent Henry Sumner and his sisters cards."

"I saw Henry here last week. I nearly fell over backward at the sight until I divined that he was on a still hunt for your sister, who didn't appear."

"Priscilla took it into her head not to go last Sunday because she didn't choose to meet Freda. It wasn't necessary to be introduced to her. Besides, no one knows anything definite."

"You are almost as pathetic as Mrs. Delano, who assured me that all the stories in circulation were absolutely false. And why, forsooth? Because Freda had told her so herself."

Lora pouted at him prettily over her lace fan. "I suppose that's intended as a hint to me; and means that you side with Priscilla."

"I was simply endeavoring to answer your conundrum about the other people. Can you imagine for one minute that when Henry reports to his mother who were here and what he saw, either of his sisters would be allowed to come? You can scarcely expect conservative Beacon Hill to swallow all its prejudices at one gulp in a single generation—strict observance of Sunday evening, smoking by women, gambling at cards and sensitiveness in polite society as to the morals of the sex which should be above suspicion. As for Mrs. Harrison Chippendale, I doubt if she ever heard of Mrs. Delano's existence; and none of her children visit the houses of people she has never heard of."

"All of which goes to prove—as Hugh constantly says—that Boston is about fifty years behind the times."

Morgan gave her one of his quizzical looks with his head on one side. "Yes—and I'm inclined to think it always will be. I dare say that's Boston's salvation."

"But the world is such a small place now. The ocean cable and the ocean greyhound and the telephone and—er—the big fortunes are everywhere rapidly rooting out mere provincialisms."

Morgan recognized the source of this ringing aphorism and his sardonic tendency got the upper hand of his desire to be tactfully suggestive to his groping friend.

"All things are possible, it seems, to Electric Coke." As he spoke his glance took in for the first time his com-

panion's magnificent jewels—a double necklace of pearls and two diamond stars.

Lora knew that he was indulging in irony, but she looked pleased. "I do wish Hugh had put you into it at the start," she cried with genuine commiseration. "If only you would write that Christmas story! Hugh could use the right sort of one as an advertisement in his business—in Electric Coke, very likely—and you would sell thousands and thousands of copies."

"So he has told me. Some day I shall be frightfully hard up and get round to it."

Lora gazed at him meditatively. "You are a funny person." After a moment she added: "I saw you talking to Freda yourself."

"I am a man—an adaptive, inconsistent man."

"Of course you are inconsistent. I thought you would say that you were studying her for a novel. Why shouldn't the highly civilized woman do whatever the highly civilized man does? That is the subject of the next debate at mama's Woman's Club. Do you disapprove of my smoking?"

"Some highly civilized women do smoke. Answer me a question in turn. Are you trying to get into Boston society?"

Lora shuffled her fan. "If you weren't an old playmate, you wouldn't dare to ask such a peculiar question."

"Perfectly true. But I am an old playmate—and fond of you."

"Well, then, of course I am. There are a number of women in society—here this evening—who do smoke."

"Ah, but you don't understand. When one is in society in Boston, one is in for all time. But, as you just remarked, Boston is behind the times; the difficult thing is to get in."

"Even for Electric Coke," flashed Lora.

"Since you have said it, even for Electric Coke. Mere multi-millions are an entering wedge, but up to date I am credibly informed that they have never proved an 'Open Sesame.'"

"I see. Then you advise me not to smoke?"

"I am confident that it will not help you with the people you spoke of—the other people," answered Morgan.

Some one joined them at this point. Otherwise Lora might have pressed her inquiries further on the spur of the moment. The conversation was not of a kind to be reopened in cold blood even by so practical and undaunted a housewife as Lora. But she pondered Morgan's remarks and amiably recognized that he had intended to do her a good turn. For the future she attended Mrs. Delano's Sunday evening receptions in a less jubilant frame of mind.

She was absorbed in trying to discover what she required besides many millions. She could not well put the blunt question to any one else, and it preyed upon her. What was the matter with them? Why were not her husband and she qualified for admission to any house or entertainment in the city? Was it envy or thin-blooded formality which kept a certain set aloof? To be sure, she was a little different from these people—she appreciated this; but in what did their superiority consist? Their methods were freezing; their outlook was limited; their scale of expenditure much less liberal than hers. Acute as she was—shrewd as she was, her easy-going optimism presently found solace—almost fierce solace in the thought that Hugh and she, not they, were the true leaders. Why should she bother her head about them? Why should she heed what Morgan Drake had said? He was friendly, but he was poor, he was unimportant, and he was unenterpris-

ing; he failed to recognize that the social standards which he had been taught to revere were antiquated and inadequate. She would proceed as she had begun—do what she chose, as she chose; continue to electrify the Back Bay by her lavish donations, and sooner or later they would be compelled to take her in.

Yet six months later, when the nuptials of Chauncey Chippendale and Beatrice Langdon were described in the newspapers, Lora turned to her husband after perusing the names of the guests at the wedding breakfast and said abruptly:

"Everybody except ourselves appears to have been at the wedding. I thought, Hugh, that General Langdon and you were quite intimate."

It had already occurred to Blaisdell that it would have been civil of the Langdons to ask them. It would have gratified him to appear with his wife at the reception and to be given the opportunity of sending a princely wedding present. For almost the first moment in his life he had felt a little slighted, and Lora's mournful remark aggravated this impression; nevertheless, he said suavely:

"We are business friends—and associates. I see him about town constantly. We invited them to our ball, and they came."

"He came. Mrs. Langdon did not come. She had a cold or a headache, I forget which. She left cards when I was out." Lora recited these bitter facts as though she knew them by heart.

"I frankly admit that I am surprised we were not asked. I would have sent a handsome present." Blaisdell tried to speak dispassionately and to suggest that after all they were not the real losers. "I do not think that it is worth regretting, however. It may even have been an oversight."

"Was it an oversight that we have not been asked to the Puritan balls?"

Blaisdell had only a hazy notion as to the identity of the Puritan balls. He remembered now, however, that he had heard Lora make two or three casual allusions to them as something out of the ordinary. In view of the variety of entertainments of all sorts open to them, why should she have set her heart on these particular balls? They were not public functions; otherwise, of course, they would have been asked. Yet it was evident she had; moreover, the omission in question was one which concerned her special domain.

"What are the Puritan balls?" he asked with the air of one who felt that the time had come to concentrate his faculties on this social matter as he would on a new business proposition.

"Oh, the balls which have been going on for years—the balls to which every one in fashionable society are invited. If you're not invited, you're not in society—that's the test. You mustn't think I'm silly, Hugh. It's because I know." Resting her elbows on the expansive shining oak table, she leaned eagerly forward telling her grievance. "We've entertained enough to be asked; we know enough people to be asked; and I thought that perhaps this year they'd ask us. But they haven't."

"Who are the people who manage them?"

"Mrs. Harrison Chippendale and Mrs. Horatio Langdon are two of the lady patronesses. Then there's Mrs. Staunton Townsend, Mrs. Paul Dudley—about a dozen in all.

"And the invitations are out?"

"I know they're out. Priscilla received one a fortnight ago. She showed it to me before she put it in the fire."

"Priscilla?"

"Yes, she is asked and we are not. She is asked and mama and Mr. Avery are not."

"Why did she put her invitation in the fire?"

"Because when she discovered that the rest of the family were left out she didn't choose to accept. I'm not sure —I'm not sure, but I have a suspicion that she may have called Henry Sumner's attention to the fact that we were not included."

"Priscilla has lived in the neighborhood of Boston all her life and her father before her. Besides, she has become acquainted with some of those people through her association with Miss Chippendale. As for your mother and Mr. Avery——"

"It might be argued, of course, that they were too old," broke in Lora, "Though Morgan Drake admitted that lots of people of their age were on the list. But you and I are not too old."

Although Blaisdell had instinctively made use of mollifying arguments, he was listening with increasing sympathy to every word his wife said, and the defiant manner in which she enunciated her last statement caused him to fold his arms as he sometimes did at a directors' meeting when the situation had become tense.

"And it isn't only the Puritan balls and the Langdon wedding," continued Lora, "it's everything. When I applied two years ago, to have a place reserved for Dorothy in the dancing-class, I was put off with the flimsy excuse that some one else would be getting it up at that time. I've thought about it—tried to make out what we could have done to justify their leaving the child out in the cold—that and the other things—and I shouldn't be a bit surprised if Mrs. Harrison Chippendale were at the bot-

tom of it. She has never forgiven us for buying their house." Lora paused a moment, with a toss of her chin to emphasize the shrewdness of this conjecture. Suddenly she exclaimed: "Aren't these people, the Chippendales, the Langdons—the whole crowd under great obligations to you, Hugh? Haven't they made lots of money in Electric Coke and everything else through following your lead?"

Blaisdell nodded. "Some of them have, certainly."

"Then why should they be permitted to insult your wife? Couldn't you ruin them if you chose?"

"Ruin them?" Blaisdell's echo was by way of marking time, for Lora's succinct sentences were summary as pistol shots. "If necessary, yes—yes, I could," he answered in his large way as the tragedy of the situation dawned on him and he found himself confronting this superb draft on his resources. With a large paper-cutter fashioned from an ivory tusk he involuntarily made the gesture of sweeping any possible enemies from the financial chess-board. But his ensuing words showed that he still harbored a less violent alternative.

"Insult you, Lora? These people cannot insult you. The mistake you make is to care a button what they say or do. Ignore them; go your way, and let them go theirs—and presently—far sooner than you think—it is you who will be setting the fashion in Boston, not they. Social leadership? Suppose the Mayor of Boston were to give a dinner in honor of the visiting son of a foreign potentate, would not we be among the very first persons selected?"

Lora made a wry face. "I don't care a picayune about dining with the Mayor of Boston, and I do wish to be invited to the Puritan balls. You're a man, Hugh, and so that may not seem comprehensible to you—so important

as it really is. But just because you're a man it may be that I know better than you what is desirable for us both socially. The trouble is, these people are the leaders at present—and they don't choose to let us in. What is more, I doubt very much if they will until you make them." By the way in which she moved her defiant little chin and by her emphasis on the last two words, Lora imparted to this dejected sentence a minatory close.

"You are the best judge of that, of course. I have always left such matters to you; they are woman's province. Since they persist in excluding you from the entertainments where you rightfully belong, I shall certainly interfere. It is still my impression that you exaggerate the influence which these old-timers exercise; their pose has become fossilized. But it is enough for me that you have called my attention to their snobbishness, and that you are distressed by it, little woman."

Blaisdell spoke as a magnate reluctantly aroused, yet like a man who intended to act none the less vigorously.

Lora was wiping her eyes. The consciousness that her champion was girding on his armor had removed the tension from her nerves, and her satisfaction took this feminine form. It was comforting to feel that if these people continued to turn a cold shoulder, she was certain to be avenged. Such was her first reflection; but after the glow of elation had subsided a sigh revealed—revealed to herself—that her satisfaction was not complete, and presently she said, as if thinking aloud:

"I wish I understood why they asked Priscilla and not me."

Although he noticed the mournful inflection, Blaisdell let Lora's monologue pass without comment. Had he not already mentioned one or two excellent reasons? And yet

a little later in the evening he realized that he was putting the same question to himself—why had they asked Priscilla? She was very different from his wife—she always had been. Was this the reason? And in what exactly did that difference consist? He remembered, too, that she had burned her invitation, and he mused complacently on the loyalty which this implied, a portion of which he appropriated to himself.

CHAPTER XV

HAVING declared her intention to settle down as a confirmed Bostonian and to renounce for the time being foreign travel with all which might result from it, Priscilla had scarcely set her desk in her father's new house in order before the correspondence flowing from the numerous demands on her time and sympathies assumed such proportions that she decided to engage a secretary. "A modern executive woman has no right to squander her vitality on clerical or household drudgery if she can afford to pay some one to do it for her." This sentiment was her step-mother's, uttered several times before Priscilla heeded it, but in the end she allowed one of the rooms of her suite to be appropriated to the use of a stenographer.

"We shall both find her very useful," purred Mrs. Avery. "So far as house-keeping is concerned, it is still a pleasure to me, thank heaven, to go into the kitchen, if only to mouse round—so I shall never abdicate the responsibility of ordering the dinner however elaborate my establishment. Lora leaves it to her *chef*—and it must be a satisfaction at times not to know what is coming next. But I can't exactly reconcile it with marrying for better or for

worse. With letters it's different. I can pass over to you Miss Murdoch the appeals for charity and the invitations to be a patroness and take tickets for this, that and the other, and whenever I do write anything for my club, I shall be able to know how it sounds type-written. But the most interesting thing about it all to me is," she added, "that only the other day you were Miss Chippendale's secretary, and now you are employing one yourself at a higher salary, and are already almost as important in the philanthropic, educational, artistic line as she. That's the way things go in this country—even in Boston."

In brief, Priscilla had suddenly become the fashion. With three sponsors so prominent, so individual and representing such different points of view as Miss Georgiana Chippendale, Mrs. Sumner and her brother-in-law, it was not surprising that she should find ready outlets for her newly aroused energies. Who is she? Where does she come from? The ladies who put these leading questions to Mrs. Sumner when informed that Priscilla was no stranger, but had lived in Boston or its vicinity all her days, first opened their eyes in mild surprise and inquired: "Why have we never heard of her?" No satisfactory answer being provided, they invariably added: "She is charming." This signified that they admired her good looks, were attracted by her spirited address, and approved of her air of distinction.

On the other hand, she commended herself to the circle in which Miss Georgiana moved by the interest she evinced in the issues of the day. Her suggestion of a club which should not condemn everything at the start was regarded as both clever and salutary. It passed from lip to lip, and presently a committee of earnest women waited on her to intimate that it was desirable to issue a call for

a meeting in order to organize. "Don't agitate against every new thing"—her very words, except that "agitate" had been substituted for "kick," so as to avoid a colloquialism which might be considered vulgar—was to be the motto of the new club, so she was informed by the spokeswoman. It would be a piquant and practical rallying cry; indeed, all questions involved had been thoroughly threshed out; and would Priscilla head the list of names to the call and consent later to serve as vice-president? The president was to be one of the younger professors of Wellesley College.

"It would be a good motto for all clubs; but are there not far too many clubs in Boston already? I couldn't venture to assume the responsibility of helping to found another."

Having given these reasons for her refusal, Priscilla for an instant became conscious of qualms. Was she not hindering instead of aiding? Pouring cold water on a good cause instead of putting her shoulder to the wheel? But the next moment these rear-guard doubts vanished. Another club for the purpose would be an absurdity. "But I shall be glad to help to inoculate the clubs we already have with the new spirit," she hastened to add.

The committee seemed disappointed at first, especially the spokeswoman—Miss Winston—a delicate, refined-looking woman with hair on the verge of gray, and a very gentle but somewhat worried voice.

"Too many clubs?" She looked at Priscilla over her eye-glasses as one doubting yet evidently contemplating a novel idea. "I had not supposed so. Too many clubs? It is possible that we have. I am not sure that we have not."

"We ought to debate it at the 'Mother Eve's Club,'"

said another of the committee. "Question—is there a superfluity of clubs already in Boston?"

"I am positive that there are too many men's clubs," said the third member. "I know of men who belong to a dozen—and that doesn't include the dining clubs and—er—the poker clubs."

"That reminds me," said Miss Winston, and she took from her black reticule an envelope which she handed to Priscilla. "I take pleasure in informing you, Miss Avery, that you have been elected a member of the Mother Eve's Club. It meets every Saturday forenoon and is devoted to the discussion of topics of vital current concern. I am the secretary. If you accept you will have an early opportunity to take part in the debate—to lead it if you prefer—on the very interesting point which you have just raised—have we or have we not in Boston too many clubs of all kinds?"

By means of this suggestion Priscilla scored a success no less signal than her first. Her new criticism spread like wildfire. "Have you met Priscilla Avery? She has ideas," was on the tongue of every woman in the community interested in social progress. And the most knowing added, when they felt sure of their audience, "She dresses well, too, and is decidedly handsome."

The support of her third ally was chiefly moral, and might be said to consist at first in her own determination to imitate his ways. She was resolved not only to be business-like, energetic and alert for opportunities, but to do things on a large scale.

When she found that she was succeeding, she derived fresh incitement from his approval. It was obvious to her that her brother-in-law was interested—a little surprised by her progress. She was conscious now and again that he was looking at her with new eyes, as if he were taking

a fresh survey of her qualities. When, as occasionally happened, she asked his advice, he let her perceive by his half bantering yet incisive comments that he realized she was making a distinct place for herself in the community by her own individuality. This was flattering, and in return she was not unwilling that he should gather from time to time that she was aware of the source of her inspiration and grateful for having been taught to cultivate spontaneity and a liberal outlook. She endeavored to make her apartment and, so far as she could, the entire house express her revolt from asceticism and her sympathy with space and color. She rejoiced to believe that the day of cramped and sober dinginess was over. Hereafter her surroundings should exemplify the joy of living. It was well to be rich if only that the picturesque tiles in her bath-room, the exquisiteness of her boudoir, the spacious distinction of the whole establishment should bear witness to the creed that it was not wrong, but one's duty, to enjoy beautiful things. It should be one of her privileges as a wealthy woman to patronize the best dressmakers, wear costly stuffs and precious gems. For—for who could tell at what hour the bridegroom might not come? It was, perhaps, her duty at her age to renounce all hope, but recognition of the possibility should continue to be a part of her enthusiasm. And she was willing even to incur the reproach of dressing for the bridegroom.

That she might get a glimpse of him—the bridegroom—was one of her reasons for going into society. This and the opportunity—a reciprocal pleasure—of going under Lora's wing. Though her days were busy, she went from beautiful house to beautiful house in the evening, entranced no less by the untrammelled flow of her own spirits than by the consciousness that she was admired. She walked at

first as one walks through a mazy, illuminated garden fascinated by the dreamy festal atmosphere, scarcely seeing, scarcely hearing, simply enjoying, without desire to discriminate or impulse to criticise. She walked as one who sleeps. When she awoke it was with a start. The bridegroom had not appeared. This was to be expected; but Lora did not seem to her happy.

Mrs. Delano's Sunday evening receptions were the definite awakening cause; or rather, the three which she attended. She had gone on the first occasion with a certain sense of jubilation. Why was not Sunday evening an ideal time for people to meet informally and agreeably? Men were less apt to be fatigued or preoccupied. The kernel of this argument had been supplied by Blaisdell and it fitted in with her own desire to register her sympathy with the enemies of social stiffness and monotony. Her first sight of women smoking had begotten the thought, "how horrified Henry Sumner would be if he could only see me puffing a cigarette! I should never be the same in his eyes again." As Henry was not present, Priscilla had abstained, chiefly from lack of practice. Her memories of the midnight cigarette with Lora years before were not provocative of confidence. But she straightway conceived the plan of startling Henry the next time he came to call by lighting one with an inveterate air.

Many of the women were smoking, and many of the men —musicians, actors and artists—had foreign countenances. After the novelty wore off, and she found herself sitting between a German violin player whose fingers were deeply stained by cigarette smoking, and a long-haired Russian, who performed marvellously on the piano, she was beset by chagrin at not being able to speak French and German fluently. Most of the foreigners spoke English; but here

was she barely able to articulate a few stammering sentences in any Continental tongue! Why had she not gone abroad and completed her education?

The second evening at Mrs. Delano's was a repetition of the first save that there was a rumor current—Morgan Drake was responsible for it—that Henry Sumner was coming—coming to see her.

"Coming to carry you home, dear," whispered Lora. "'This is no place for any woman worthy to become my wife.' Can't you hear him?"

"I'm not altogether sure that it is," she responded, looking her sister in the face. "For me, I mean," she added with an imperious toss of her head, as she realized what she had said. "Bother his wife. I doubt very much if I shall be worthy to tie the shoelaces of that very superior person."

Lora ignored the familiar protestation, being momentarily much more interested by Priscilla's implied stricture on the quality of the entertainment.

"I agree that it's rather dull to-night. The celebrities are very small potatoes," she said. "But next week Freda has promised to come."

"Freda?"

Priscilla dwelt on the final syllable with a rising inflection at the remembrance of diverse dismaying social scandals associated with the name of this noted actress of foreign antecedents. It was not the moment to discuss the matter, for what Lora had said had been whispered in passing and they were virtually within earshot of other people. But each recognized the unsympathetic attitude of the other, and when they were in the carriage alone together—for Mrs. Avery had been kept at home by a headache—each was prepared to resume the subject. Lora was the first to broach it.

"Mrs. Delano happens to know that the stories about Freda are grossly exaggerated. She may, in the course of her life, have—er—done things which people off the stage wouldn't do, for the temptations of an actress—especially those with temperament—must be tremendous. But the convincing argument is that the rest of the world refuses to apply the same strict standard to people who have done something great—the limited few, as Hugh said, to whom they are under great artistic obligations—which they do to the every-day person like you and me. There are individuals who are bigger than conventions." Feeling that she had expressed herself with a pungent reasonableness, which her sister could not gainsay if she did not wish to impair her reputation for intelligent liberality, Lora leaned back and buried her face in the bunch of roses which she had brought away with her. Her husband was in New York again, and she had been asked by Mrs. Delano to fill a place at the dinner of eight which was the invariable prelude for a favored few to the Sunday evening gatherings.

Lora had evidently discussed the point with Blaisdell—such was Priscilla's first thought—and he had declared it to be a case of common-sense triumphing over uncompromising conventions for the sake of the world's enjoyment. She could almost hear him say the words. But at least he had not said them to her. If she had been swept off her feet by them, she would almost have been grateful for the sake of not differing from him. As it was, she recognized, to her own surprise, that she remained not only unconvinced, but was already resolute in her intention not to compromise in the smallest degree in regard to this particular matter. But though her pulses were stirred, she desired to appear no less dispassionate than her sister.

"What becomes, then, of social standards? Isn't there such a thing as refined, elegant society?"

"Abroad, if people are distinguished and very clever, one does not make invidious inquiries."

"But that is in Bohemian society. The men go, but their wives usually stay away. There's a real society in all foreign countries to which—er—courtesans, however gifted, have found the gates barred."

"I should prefer Bohemian society. It would be much less dull," answered Lora complacently.

"But the one is genuine, the other spurious, however lively. They can't be mixed. They never have been mixed."

"Perhaps in this country we shall show that they can be mixed without injurious consequences—er—in the case of real genius. There's the point, Priscilla; when it comes to genius, American real society, as you call it, will have the sense and the courage to let the bars down—er—and not use such nasty epithets," said Lora, and she tapped her little foot on the carriage floor.

"In Boston? Never. There are people who would die first." Priscilla was surprised at her own warmth. It came across her that she was speaking as Henry Sumner might have done, and she was inwardly appalled.

"Those are the people who never come to Mrs. Delano's Sunday evenings, I suppose. Many of them merely because it's Sunday. The day may dawn in Boston when those people will not be invited to the entertainments to which they would like to go."

Priscilla noticed the touch of asperity imparted to this speech, as if Lora had certain individuals in her mind's eye. It was the first intimation to her that her sister was not socially content. But she evolved this later rather than

at the moment, inasmuch as she was still rubbing her eyes after her sudden awakening to the need of discrimination. She was spurred by the desire to make clear that whatever the future might have in store for her as the result of such a threat, she was ready to take a definite stand now.

"Each woman must judge for herself. You're married, Lora; I'm not. Possibly that makes a difference. I've not many scruples, as you know—but one must draw the line at something; and I draw it at meeting Freda socially. And I'm inclined to think that I don't care to accept invitations from any hostess who receives her socially."

"Not to accept invitations for the other evenings would simply be like biting your own nose off, dear." This was so very clear to Lora that she disposed of it in this summary fashion as irrelevant. "I don't think being married makes much difference," she continued. "It isn't necessary to be introduced to her, and it seems to me a pity to draw the line on so harmless and interesting a thing as watching her from the other side of the room. I know that Mrs. Delano expects there will be a crush."

"Then my room will be better than my company. This is one of the few occasions, Lora dear, when you and I must agree to differ."

One of the effects of this decision of Priscilla's was her moral inability to light a cigarette in Henry Sumner's presence when he next called. It seemed to her as she sat and looked at him that they had changed characters; that she was a Puritan maiden and he almost a dare-devil. Not entirely, but almost. Not only had he been seen at Mrs. Delano's on Sunday evening, but on that Sunday evening of all Sunday evenings when Freda was present. To light a cigarette would be wasted on such a gay Lothario to begin with—and in the next place she was face to face with

the dismaying reflection that she was responsible for his downfall. Dismaying because a year ago she would have gloried in the fact, whereas now, having prevailed upon him to swallow his minor scruples for her sake, she was shrinking from the imputation on herself which this implied. She had ceased to be—she never had been the sort of person she had led him to believe; moreover, she wished him to know it. Yet there was no denying that it was her beckoning hand which had lured him from his frosty pinnacle, and that if he had consented to be introduced to the compromising Freda, it had been in order not to appear narrow-minded in her eyes. At this rate of progress, who could tell that it might not become presently her Christian duty to endeavor to stay his downward career? For, as the result of processes which continued to baffle her, she had become not far from prim; for the moment, as it seemed, primmer than he.

The idea of his degeneracy was entertaining for a moment, then she shuddered. Not from concern for him but for herself. What mattered it to her what became of this exemplary young man compared with the importance of understanding, if not resisting, these baffling processes? Whither was she drifting, and why was she drifting? Here she was taking back water again where she had confidently assumed that she knew the channel—and taking it so soon. For her admissions at the Art Museum had savored to her of generosity quite as much as of justice. She had obeyed the impulse to throw her faithful dog a bone. She had let him know that while she had no desire to mould herself upon his mother, she appreciated her worth and the value of the traditions for which she stood. And so far as he was concerned, she had intimated that, though her estimate of his personal qualities continued far from

flattering, she had exonerated him in her mind from certain indictments. She had glided away from the interview in high spirits, believing that she had displayed praiseworthy magnanimity, and she had accepted the first-fruits of her behavior—namely, the straightening out of her strained relations with this Boston Brahmin—as a legitimate reward. He had taken her at her word and come to see her, and what might be termed an intellectual truce had been established between them.

It was the sequel which worried her. She could not shift to his shoulders the blame for the state of mind in which she found herself at present. During the ensuing months he had plainly sought for once in his life not to figure as an irritant, and without sacrificing his principles to avoid topics which might ruffle the halcyon aspect of their mutual forbearance. She had done the same, and by way of compensation for her previous magnanimity she had felt at liberty not to prevent him from following in her social wake, which he seemed bent on doing. She had argued that it would broaden his outlook and improve his manners. She would let him see that she had no sympathy with asceticism or rawness. If he insisted on pursuing her, he must keep pace with her proclivities and tastes—those of a modern rich man's daughter—even if this entailed ceasing to wear gloves a size too large for him and restraining the angle of his inartistically arranged evening tie.

She flattered herself that, as a result of thus dancing attendance on her, he had improved a little on the score of personal spruceness. Hitherto he had appeared almost obtrusively clean, as if recently soused with soap and water; his hair was apt to be too long or too short, and the trousers of his evening clothes were prone to bag for lack of pressing. Though it could not be said that he had be-

come irreproachable in this respect, these inelegancies were less noticeable than formerly. The right not to be valeted was one of the few points on which her father had insisted under the stylish *régime* inaugurated by her step-mother after their removal to Commonwealth Avenue, just as he had clung to his subscription to the *Nation* during the domestic innovations which followed his second marriage. But her step-mother had surreptitiously managed to renew and enlarge his wardrobe with such success that he had lately become addicted to wearing a dark-blue fancy waistcoat with red dots as a foil to his sober morning coat. Henry Sumner had thus far condescended to nothing so frivolous as this; but he had made distinct progress. To be sure, the nap of the silk hat which he now wore on Sundays and holidays was apt to be rubbed here and there the wrong way and had lost its lustre. Soon it would have lost its style also, for she opined that it reposed in an old bandbox the rest of the week and was expected to last the rest of his life. On the whole, however, he had gained perceptibly in finish without losing his self-respect, whereas she, having pointed the way like a will-o'-the-wisp, was suddenly out of conceit of her own leadership. It had been educational to him to see her surrounded by other men, the chief social asset of some of whom was their exquisiteness. Two of them had been suitors; each more presentable than he. Even though they were seeking her money, would that she could have fallen over head and ears in love! Was not the hour ripe for such a contingency? Instead she was heart-whole and in the mortifying predicament of being obliged again sooner or later to eat her own words as the consequence of playing the mentor out of sheer philanthropy.

Sooner or later, but why immediately? If possible, she

would leave him to discover for himself that she had doubled on her course like a bewildered hare and sought sanctuary. As it happened the occasion lent itself to delay. Henry was preoccupied. As was customary with him when he had something on his mind, he was not sensitive to outside impressions. He had come to tell Priscilla of his younger sister's engagement to Professor Paton. Therefore he never got an inkling that her thoughts were oscillating between the brink of confession and the alternative of reaching out her hand for the cigarette box by way of hanging for a sheep instead of a lamb. It is engrossing to any woman to learn that a man who has once loved her has found solace elsewhere. Such is the inconsistency of human nature, she sometimes entertains passing regrets. But the announcement invariably puts everything else for the time being into the background. Priscilla proved no exception. She experienced not the slightest pang, but she was so completely absorbed by the news that she forgot her state of mind. Now that Professor Paton was betrothed to another, his good points stood out in relief and she found herself listening eagerly to the details of the affair.

"We feared Barbara's over-conscientiousness might cause her to distrust whether she cared for him enough—though the family felt sure she did," Henry was saying. "My mother is very much pleased. My sister and he have many tastes in common, and it means a fresh bond with Harvard. They will have to live very simply, of course." His pause and the almost furtive glance which he cast around the sumptuous drawing-room indicated plainly as words to Priscilla that he was thinking: "I'm well aware that it wouldn't suit you at all." Then he added: "But they are prepared for that."

Priscilla could not resist saying: "I know that Professor Paton owns some Electric Coke. I saw his name recently on the list of stockholders. If it sells some day at $1,000 a share, as some of the insiders expect, their programme will be ruthlessly interfered with."

Henry shook his head. "I'm willing to admit that it costs more to live than formerly—which Uncle Harrison says is due to the tariff. But barring necessities, they will not care for money. That is where——"

"I fail to do justice to your sister and her future husband?"

"I was not claiming credit for them. I was merely stating their individual point of view."

Priscilla's mobile face quickened. "It's the real thing, isn't it? I recognized so the moment you told me the news."

Henry looked puzzled, for there was amusement as well as earnestness in her tone, and she was such a chameleon in her moods with him.

"A typical intellectual Boston marriage," she declared with obvious satisfaction.

Henry colored a little. "I assure you they are very much in love."

Priscilla bit her lip to avoid contradiction. To dispute the assertion in terms would be a liberty, since the woman was his sister. "I've no doubt that they are very much attached to one another." Priscilla plumed herself on this phrase as she uttered it. "But it's essentially a mating of minds—a union of mental processes as well as of hearts if you like. A rising Harvard professor and a daughter of one of Boston's first families! Of course it is, Mr. Sumner. You must certainly admit that."

Her smiling eagerness was like a long wave from a roused yet sunny sea which sweeps upon an interposing

rock and submerges it with creamy spray. "I suppose it may be termed so," he replied unflinchingly after a moment, confessing yet undaunted. Then he added: "It may interest you to hear that Mr. Paton has been made a full professor."

Priscilla's eyes sparkled. "How delicious—and appropriate—and inevitable."

Henry tried to ignore the medley of adjectives. "Naturally we are gratified. But why—er—appropriate?"

"Wasn't it the logical outcome—the reward—of marrying a Sumner and a Chippendale? Harvard recognized the bond."

"Mr. Paton is a scholar. His promotion was inevitable if he had remained single."

"In the dim future, doubtless. But this clinched the matter, didn't it? You know it did," she cried gaily. Then before he could frame a thoroughly truthful retort to her charge she continued, "I told you not long ago, you remember, that I had become interested in Boston—interested in understanding the old Boston which your people represent. This engagement is a genuine bit of old Boston."

"Old?" he queried.

"Old—but fossilized. The self-conscious philosophy which it stood for is dead. What is left is merely automatic—like your booby huts and your lawyers' green bags. The Boston to which they—and you—belong performs its old-fashioned functions solemnly as ever, blind to the fact that decomposition has set in. It's like—it's like the Wonderful One-Hoss Shay, which went to picees all at once. Do you remember?

> 'That was built in such a logical way
> It ran a hundred years to a day,
> And then of a sudden it——'

That's what will happen, Mr. Sumner, to the Boston to which you belong—drop to pieces all at once."

A more engulfing wave this. The smiling sea in pity yearned to explain that its onslaught, though vital, was not vicious. "I'm immensely interested in all this—sociologically, if that's the term. Boston has had a glorious past. It is to have a glorious future." She threw back her shapely head like a princess, but it was plain her antithesis was meant to convey that, though the community's redemption was to be accomplished by others, she realized that her visitor was a victim of atavism and not a free agent. To cement this graciousness she yielded to a further impulse. "I seem to be amused. Don't think I'm laughing at you. It's at the philosophy. If there was a time when I did laugh at you, please forget it; I shall never laugh at you again. It's not your fault—what you stand for; and I frankly admit that it has a certain picturesqueness of its own like the old andirons and hall clocks. Shall we be friends—real friends?"

She put out her hand as she spoke. The clasp which she exchanged with Henry was that of a seeker after truth and justice.

"There is nothing which I desire more," he answered. His words of joy were mumbled from surprise, but Priscilla had taken his acquiescence for granted. Her tender of amity was the forerunner of a no less signal declaration.

"It follows—as I told you that day at the Art Museum—that we must alway look at things from totally different standpoints. We belong to separate camps, I and my people, you and your people."

In the shock of personal contact had her hand been a tea cup, Henry might have let it fall, for his own was trembling. Despite her strictures, his heart was full of joy, for there

was no room to doubt her sincerity, no question that at last a gleam of genuine sunshine had pierced the cloud-bank of their relations. Before their meeting at the Art Museum she had disdained him; since then she had tolerated him—ostensibly because she admired his mother and had become interested in the ideals which the latter represented. Now, although she declared that the philosophy in which he had been nurtured was outworn, she had paused in her academic discussion of Boston wedlock to flash at him this ray of personal regard. Though her concluding words had been martial, they negatived in no sense her previous assertion that he and she had become friends again at last. They never had been friends since that fateful interview so many years ago when she had weighed him in the balance and found him wanting. Weighed his soul, as she thought; but was it not his body? His wooden body, in sheer defiance of which he had grotesquely kissed her lily white wrist? Now this same hand had lain close in his own again in pledge of reconciliation. Did not this merit some return on his part, even though it might involve a temporary lowering of his flag? His introspective soul could not deny that there was some truth in her animadversions. If concrete proof were needed, the still abiding consciousness of that self-same wooden body provided it.

"I protest against belonging to separate camps," he said. "If our points of view are different, I must try to adopt yours."

The contraction of Priscilla's eyebrows left room for doubt whether from an eleemosynary standpoint such wholesale capitulation was to her liking.

"How can you if you are true to yourself?" was her comment.

"Even rats desert a sinking ship. May not one warned seek an antidote to fossilization—endeavor to improve?"

"Oh, you have improved," she exclaimed with proselytizing promptness. Was it candor or the dread of eliciting a personal note which led her to add, "I doubt if they are more than surface changes. You cannot help being the same at heart."

"At heart?" In pensive rhapsody Henry ruffled the nap of his silk hat the wrong way, intending to smooth it. But the untoward gesture did not interrupt his speech. "You have said I am self-conscious. I presume that my other faults in your eyes are my deadly earnestness and—er—my narrow-mindedness."

Priscilla listened in amazement. Not only was he deftly holding out his cardinal sins like sizzling apples on a fork, but—more wonderful still—by the use of the word "deadly" he had shown that he was capable of laughing at himself.

"How did you find out?" she asked.

"Am I not right?"

Priscilla drew a deep breath. The opportunity was one of a lifetime, and he had brought it upon himself. Moreover, he had his statement pat as if he had worked it out in the watches of the night. "You have always appeared to me self-conscious and narrow-minded. I used to think you carped simply for the sake of carping. But I was mistaken; I admit your seriousness—your deadly seriousness."

"Thank you," said Henry, emulating the well-trained English servant's reply to overwhelming orders. "I have known your opinion of me for a long time. And strange to think—they are all really virtues run to seed."

She pondered a moment. "So they are—so they are.

And yet a virtue run into the ground is worse than a vice. It lacks dignity, for it is merely futile." She enjoyed her characterization, and under the spell of it bent her gaze archly on her antagonist, desiring to enforce it. "That's just what those old Bostonians are—futile," she said to herself.

"Very likely," he answered. "But it explains things. It's a heritage—a respectable heritage."

Priscilla could not help smiling. This new vein of irony at his own expense was a revelation. Why had she never detected it? "Of course it is; I see what you mean; it's a case of the virtues not the sins of the fathers being visited on the third and fourth generations."

Henry hesitated a moment. "After all," he said, "it is actions which count. You see I know my faults. It would be the part of a friend to tell me what I have done lately of which you disapprove. Will you not accept me—as a pupil?"

The invitation recalled to Priscilla's mind her previous humiliation of spirit. Yet it was plainly not the time to meet abnegation with abnegation. If he were so absorbed in contemplation of his own shortcomings that he had failed to be duly shocked by hers, so much the better for her from a tactical standpoint. Wherefore bite the dust save to break the force of censure? Might she not even be justified in saving her self-respect and rehabilitating her character behind the formidable screen of school-mistress? Her alert thoughts sped along this pathway to consideration of his more pressing inquiry. He had improved, but she had told him that he was unchanged at heart. It ought to be a simple matter to put her finger on a line of conduct or individual acts of which she disapproved. She sought to do so; yet, as she sought, an irritating sense of failure

succeeded her endeavors. Irritating because, though precise convicting instances eluded her, she remained positive —fiercely positive—that they existed.

"Why do you distrust—throw cold water on everything which my brother-in-law does?"

This reply was offered as a stop gap to gain time. But as she finished Priscilla became suddenly aware that it embodied the kernel of what she wished to say—that it was her true grievance. She realized this with surprise; yet at the moment she did not shrink from it; on the contrary, she rejoiced in the singleness of the charge.

Henry stiffened a little. Apparently he had been prepared to hear that this was the sum and substance of his offending, for his reply was immediate.

"Lately. What have I said or done lately?"

She ignored the qualification. "But you do distrust him—still?"

There was a touch of appeal in her voice, accusatory as it was. It seemed to Henry's listening ears to say—"this is the crucial difference between us; your other concessions are of no avail if you are obdurate here; yield—and our truce is cemented." She had taken him up onto a mountain, as it were, and exhibited to him the kingdoms of the earth.

"I have every desire not to distrust him."

This was the limit of his denial; his lips refused to muster more. It was equivalent, he knew, to an admission that what she had alleged was true. In a single breath he had undone the progress of months. But though the temptation to recant had been luring, his old tenacity of opinion, which had seemed obligingly dormant of late, had reasserted itself commandingly.

"But you do."

"Blaisdell and I look at things from opposite standpoints. We always have; I fear we always shall."

"Exactly; just as I said; you belong to different camps. And I belong to his."

Cognizant that the trenchant coldness of her conclusion had caused their resuscitated friendship to droop like late flowers at the touch of frost, Henry remained silent for a moment musing on the havoc wrought in what had been just now a smiling garden. But Priscilla seemed to negative regret on her part by the eager words:

"Hugh Blaisdell is the most public-spirited man I know; the most generous, the most broad-minded, the—most effective."

She lingered on the final words as on a bugle blast. Often as she had formulated an estimate of her brother-in-law in her own thoughts, this was the first opportunity she had ever had to proclaim it as his champion. So convincing did it sound to herself that she mistook for an instant Henry's hesitation for the recoil of a censorious nature before the clarion of truth.

"Yes—undeniably yes—effective. The important word, isn't it? He makes one feel from the first that he is that. Effectiveness in the modern sense comprehends everything else. But one can be effective for good as well as for evil. I am unable to regard Blaisdell's influence as other than a menace to the community."

Death knell as this might prove to his hopes, Henry felt the necessity of being thus explicit. Up to a certain point he had been willing to compromise—even though he might be obliged to wink at degenerating ethical results. But to equivocate here would be treason to his soul. As a social factor Blaisdell was the antipodes of himself

—the prosperous ogre to whom he yearned to play a Jack the giant-killer.

"A menace to the community—menace to the community?" Priscilla was unprepared no less for the quality than for the directness of the charge. In view of the recent course of events she had flattered herself that Henry would mince matters. Had he proved a mush here, his subjugation would have been complete and she could have ridden away with his scalp dangling at her saddle-bow—and dismissed him forever. "Do you realize what this community owes to him?" She paused a moment that he might realize the enormity of his injustice. "I will tell you a few of the things. He has revolutionized business methods and helped to transform Boston from a provincial town into a city; he has developed rapid transit; endowed the Maternity Hospital; enriched the Art Museum. He has given right and left from the wealth acquired by his own unaided talents to promote deserving causes, and foster struggling genius."

So fluent was her eulogy that it had the effect of being by rote; but to show that her recitals were only extracts from an ampler record she repeated—"These are a few of the things." She sat upright with her hands clasped on her lap, tense in every fibre. The desire to testify, which had succeeded her amazement, was yielding to a more caustic emotion. "I do not understand, Mr. Sumner, what you can mean."

"His generosity and public spirit are in his favor, I admit."

"Yet you have done your best to thwart them whenever you could." Her words supplied the click of flint intercepting steel. The flash from her eyes emulated the spark.

"And have been invariably worsted. I admit this, too."

Priscilla frowned at his concessions. They reminded her of the gifts of the Greeks.

"Of what do you accuse him?" she asked more deliberately.

"Accuse him?" The iteration was the echo of his own sudden perplexity. He was in a position only to generalize and she was certain to demand—had a right to demand concrete instances. "Of lowering all our standards; of debauching public sentiment," he added.

This was exactly what he had in mind, but he was almost sorry that he had yielded to the temptation. He was not sure that it was not cowardly for he was obliged to stop there. He knew his indictment by heart. "I accuse him" (he said to himself) "of accomplishing his purposes by plausible underhand methods—of manipulating legislative bodies, of subtly controlling the press; of keeping his fingers on all the stops in the organ of public utility and making them pipe what sounds he pleases. I accuse him of dulling the public conscience by the hypodermic of his contagious plausibility, so that every wrong is made to appear a right." But the proofs? She would ask for his proofs, and alas! he did not possess them. He knew that his stricutres were true, but he lacked documentary evidence.

"I wish that you would mention some instances," exclaimed Priscilla, with defiant calm.

Henry did not answer for an instant. He no longer regretted that he had spoken, for what was to be gained by a postponement or evasion of the issue which she had forced upon him? Strong as his innate antagonism to her brother-in-law had been, it was something of a revelation to him that this difference of opinion was the real chasm which separated them. Having bridged it, she had handed

him an axe, and with a fell stroke he had cut in two the plank by which she had sought to bring them closer. Proofs? He should have had them ready. But was not the true fabric of his criticism made up of substances impalpable as air? Of substances which would dissolve if fingered, yet which, to sensitive eyes and ears and nerves, were convincing testimony? He saw with the eyes of a long line of truth-seeking ancestors—his heritage, as he was still proud to boast. If only she would see as he saw, no formal proofs were necessary.

"It would not be worth while," he answered.

"Not worth while? But you have accused——"

"I know. If you do not see for yourself, I should not succeed in convincing you."

Priscilla's face was a study, for the significance of this parry was not lost on her. "But at least——"

"I am unable to cite indisputable facts. It would be simply my word against his."

"You made a definite charge."

"You asked my opinion—why I distrusted him—and I told you."

"But why have you nothing to base it on more tangible than—er—introspection?"

Henry winced slightly at the aptly chosen term; then his observant eagle look melted into something quizzical as he deduced an explanation which seemed to play into her hands.

"I suppose that is a part of what you style my—our—futility."

Though she realized that after the first assault he had withdrawn his forces without striking another blow and left her mistress of the field, Priscilla instead of pressing the retiring foe, as an unexhausted victor should, remained

pensive. "If you do not see for yourself, I should not succeed in convincing you." These were insidious words. They contained a reflection on herself; they were an intimation of a superiority which she had always resented in the abstract, but which, in the form of a definite instance and on the lips of this stubborn yet serenely confident opponent, negatived the effect of his pusillanimous retreat and already made her victory a barren one. Thus musing she mechanically looked at Henry as if to discover from a fresh inspection the secret of this hypnotism. She noticed again his austerity, his large nose and prominent cheek bones. Though his face was a trifle fuller than formerly, his air of earnestness still gave it a hungry, almost hawk-like expression. His mouth was partially concealed by his drooping mustache which had thickened, but Priscilla was sure of its asceticism. She noticed, too, that the nap of his hat had been rubbed the wrong way, and that his standing collar gaped a little. The pin in his expansive Lord Stanley cravat—his Sunday neck-tie—which was in the form of a gold horse-shoe (a present brought him from Europe many years before by his Uncle Harrison), was sadly in need of burnishing. Yet with all his lack of finish, it could not be denied that he looked a gentleman. The delicacy of his finely chiselled features and their responsiveness to what was passing through his mind left no room to doubt his intelligent refinement; and his penetrating eyes—they were his best feature—were still luminous with the sardonic remark which he had just directed against himself. After all, she had failed to turn the tables on him. He had managed to shift the issue. It was no longer Blaisdell's, but her own character, which was challenged and held up to scrutiny. While her glance still rested on him, Priscilla heard him continue:

"What you state is true; I have nothing tangible to offer at present—nothing that I can point to and say, 'look at this, read that.' But I reserve the right, if I may, to come to you and say, 'here they are, the proofs, the requisite proofs.'"

It was an appeal; bravely though it rang at the close, it was still an appeal. Evidently he felt that he had put himself in a position where he had need to crave her indulgence. He had merited a rebuke and the hour was ripe for administering one. Yet as she opened her lips to reply, Priscilla realized that, though she was seeking to obey a logical impulse to inflict chastisement, she had lost her zest in that feature of the situation. His futility (she still clung to this consoling word) was immaterial in comparison with the insinuation that her own spiritual vision was defective.

"It seems to me strange," she said, "that you should be unable to offer at the present time a single proof of—your remarkable statement." Thereupon she frowned to cover her own consternation.

Henry mistook this knitting of her brows for genuine severity. "If I had believed that I could make clear to you what I mean, I would try to do so now."

Priscilla did not avoid his Delphic utterance. "You mean that the fault is in me?" she said with a withering smile. As she spoke a servant appeared with the tea things, which he proceeded to arrange on a little ornamental table in front of her.

"Fault?" echoed Henry.

"Misfortune I should have said, of course." A footman is at times a convenient background for irony.

"If you put it that way—in a certain sense, yes. But I hope some day to——"

"It is the present which interests me. If I am color blind, I wish to know it at once, not in the dim future."

Henry sighed. That slight involuntary signal of distress reached Priscilla's ears above the clatter of her preparations to serve tea. It signified to her that as usual self-absorption had prevented him from guessing the true state of affairs, and that, misled by her air of raillery, he had failed to grasp the secret of which she had just afforded him a glimpse. He was rising to depart.

"No tea, Mr. Sumner?"

"I never take it in the afternoon."

"Ah, yes; it keeps you awake, I believe."

Henry lingered for a moment. She was crushing him and he was once more the victim of his own inherent want of tact.

"I have been clumsy again," he murmured. "I fear I have shattered our newly-established friendship, which meant so much to me."

What a good soul he was—and how guileless! Such was Priscilla's thought as she surveyed him from her vantage ground behind the tea tray. He was not looking at her as he spoke. Instead, he was trying to smooth out with his coat sleeve the nap of his hat, the ruffled surface of which his shy glance had just detected. Could any place but Boston produce his counterpart? Why had she ceased to be indignant? He had certainly given her just cause to be. If she were sure that he bored her, now was the time to terminate their intimacy forever. But she would hold on to him, if for no other reason, to vindicate her own clear-sightedness.

"We have been pointing out each other's faults like two school-girls," she said. "The obligations of friendship are reciprocal. If there is some essential failing which one

does not recognize—color blindness, for instance—is it not the part of the other to be persistent?" She was well aware that he was capable of entangling his foot in her tea table and upsetting it, but he was sometimes mentally agile in understanding her when she talked in parables.

It proved so here. Henry's face changed in a moment. "Ah," he cried, "then you are not hopelessly offended?"

Priscilla pursed her lips. She had no intention of being too good to him. Moreover, the direct question caused her to feel some qualms on the score of loyalty to her brother-in-law.

"That depends. I am giving you time—the time you asked for—to vindicate yourself. If you fail, and I feel morally certain that you will," she said with emphasis, looking at him steadily over her tea cup, "why, then we can never be friends again. I should have the right to—to despise you, wouldn't I?"

"You would. But if I succeed?" Henry retorted with characteristic eagerness.

"Succeed?" she repeated. Then, as if she were talking to herself, and were facing for the first time an appalling possibility, she added: "In that event I shall be a very unhappy woman."

CHAPTER XVI

As has been stated, Henry Sumner's arraignment of Blaisdell had occurred some six months prior to Lora's appeal to her husband on the subject of the Puritan balls. It was not without its direct influence both on Henry and on Priscilla. It enabled him to dispense with the check-rein by which he had been endeavoring for her sake to pull

up his prejudice. His mouth had spoken out of the fulness of his heart, and he could no longer hope to win her favor by modifying his opinion of her favorite. His only chance of reestablishing himself in her good graces was to prove to her that he was right. During the moments of their conversation when he had eagerly sought to name instances which should speak for themselves he had desisted from a sudden sense of a lack of practical information, and he had been forced to content himself for the time being with glittering generalities—trenchant, but none the less generalities. He had gone from the interview resolving to probe more deeply into the affairs of the body, social and politic, so that, when challenged hereafter to support his statements, he would not be convicted of futility.

He said to himself as he strode away from her house that he could not afford to be content with the plea that Blaisdell was so hedged about with privilege and bulwarked from close observation that his secret actions could only be surmised. That he fervently believed him to be an enemy of society from the standpoint of the best citizenship—which was the only one with which he and Miss Avery were concerned—might be a justification for saying so in the heat of discussion, but did not excuse him from promptly taking steps to verify what would otherwise become calumny. Two results of their argument were obvious: He must smoke Blaisdell out or henceforth he must hold his peace; and, secondly, his avocation—his taste for taking part in public affairs—had received the fillip of a private cause; for his personal happiness had become dependent on his demonstrating that his accusations were true. At the same time his conscience was free, for he had stigmatized Blaisdell in his own heart long before the issue had become a personal one.

As he pursued his way through the Public Garden and across the Common the rays from the afternoon sun were falling on the gilded dome of the State House. This conspicuous and cherished landmark had associations for him apart from ordinary civic pride, since it sheltered the battle-flags of the militia who had served in the War of the Rebellion. It was his wont not infrequently to visit the rotunda to gaze upon the tattered, war-stained remnants of the colors of his father's regiment. As his glance rested on the familiar building he sighed, for envy of his father's lot assailed him. A splendid—yet because the appeal had been so direct—was it not a comparatively easy solution of the battle of life? He had often envied the martial glory, but hitherto it had chiefly served as an incentive to noble deeds of his own contrivance, the opportunity for which would not be long delayed.

Now as he followed the horizon line in an arc, his mind's eye reproduced beyond the tree-tops and the busy boundary of Tremont Street, the panorama of a new, smoky heterogeneous city—the almost mushroom-like successor of the town of his ancestors and of his own boyhood. The little orbit in which he had been nurtured and in which they had revolved had become almost a side circuit in comparison with the swaths of life which swept daily through those thoroughfares beyond—arteries of high finance buttressed with great trust companies, and capillaries of retail trade guarded and advertised when the sun went down by a cordon of electric light along which surged a new population, Italians, Poles and Portuguese in whose favor the quondam Irishmen of the North End had renounced their monopoly of the pick and shovel. On his left hand, through the elms, he could detect the white door and old-fashioned curled railing of the

family mansion—his Aunt Georgiana's—and a bee line would lead him face to face with the brass knocker of his Uncle Baxter's solitary residence on Park Street, around which real estate agents metaphorically hovered, like vultures over an aged lion, ready to appropriate it for shops the moment the owner was safely interred in Mt. Auburn. Everything else was changing, almost everything else was gone. Yes, Priscilla was right, the old Boston was moribund, and the new, with its whir and its glare and its bustle offered a fresh set of problems to the hungry spirit; new, and infinitely puzzling. His opportunity was at hand—to smoke out Blaisdell. But how was he to seize it? How was he to become a force in this easy-going democratic Boston? For democracy, as Morgan Drake was constantly pointing out, was the modern watchword even in Boston; while he, a futile aristocrat, was bent chiefly on refining his individual soul by the white light of Concord philosophy. He yearned to die at the head of a regiment, but he shrank from soiling his hands with the muck of common life.

To the taunt in which he thus indulged Henry retorted swiftly in self-defence, "Am I not active in the Associated Charities? Have I not been a watch-dog of the Common?" Though these virtues were not to be gainsaid, they seemed to him then and there to dwindle until they became of pigmy size. In order to prevail, he must no longer stand aloof in the isolation of conscious superiority; he must no longer refuse to lend a hand because those who would welcome his aid did not aim at absolute perfection. He must not always be in opposition. His gospel must henceforth be a broader sympathy with his fellow-man. The brotherhood of man. Deeply in earnest as he was, the phrase brought a wry taste to his palate. How could men be his brothers unless

they raised themselves to his standards? Must he sacrifice his ideals, his principles, his birthright by lowering his to theirs? As he faced the anguish of this alternative—for spiritual clap-trap or equivocation were not among his faults—he found himself murmuring aloud: "Are buying and selling and amusing themselves for the sake of amusement all they care for? Is the old Boston spirit really dead?"

It was the involuntary cry of one eager to believe the contrary, yet appalled by the odds. While he sought a consoling answer to his murmur he beheld on the mall a few yards ahead a propitious sight. A nondescript but amiable-looking individual—by his appearance an everyday citizen—had gathered around him in a circle a score or more of the fowls of the air—the city pigeons—and was feeding them with grains of corn from a side pocket. Other passers attracted by the spectacle had become bystanders. Henry stood still on the outer fringe of this group and watched the tame birds compete for and peck at the desired kernels. They revealed a certain leisurely dignity even under the spur of excitement. A few of them looked draggled, but most were plump, with here and there a glossy iridescent breast and a mien as if the possessors knew themselves to be proud denizens of Beacon Hill.

The sight served as a rainbow of promise to Henry's eyes. His earliest associations were with the ancestors of these same birds. One of his first childish memories was of feeding them on the window-sill of his father's counting-room. It served also as an antidote to what he had been forced to witness on balmy spring days in recent years—the Common desecrated by the prostrate forms of unkempt loungers—many of them in stupor; by scattered news-

papers and costermongers' colored wrappings. There was still some delicacy of sentiment left—some reverence for the trees and turf and creatures in this historic enclosure which had become a people's park.

As he mused he caught sight in the near distance of two squirrels scampering up the trunk of one of the elms on the Beason Street mall—large fellows with bushy tails. Here was another favorable omen. He had heard lately that the squirrels were being better protected as the result of his Uncle Harrison's and Aunt Georgiana's protests. The news that he had seen these would gladden his relatives.

Henry rang at the door of his aunt's house with a lighter heart and a sense of fresh determination. The old Boston spirit might be dormant, but it could be counted on to reassert itself. It might be stifled for a time, but it never failed to crop out anew. At whatever the cost he would battle to preserve its essence; and, in spite of the odds, he would justify having shaken his fist in the face of the new and speciously false ideals.

"I have decided to take up politics," he could not refrain from informing his aunt whom he found at home.

Miss Georgiana had opinions to express and questions to ask on a variety of subjects. After Henry had promised to remain to high tea—her Sunday function at which quince marmalade and waffles invariably formed the complement to cold chickens and ham—she gave him an opportunity to tell her about the squirrels, and to relate the incident of the pigeons. But he did not get another chance to broach his confidence until she had run the gamut of the diverse burning topics in which she happened to be most interested at the moment. How did he like the new Public Library now that it was finished and

what did he think of the Sargent decorations? Had he heard that Mrs. Merrivale, the medium of the Psychic Society, was under a new and more articulate control? He would never put any flesh on his bones until he adopted the latest regimen—raw eggs between meals; one before breakfast, five during the day, and one at night. Mrs. Everett Farrar had gained twenty-five pounds in three months on the diet. The first was difficult to swallow, but the others slipped down easily, just like oysters.

When finally she paused and, looking searchingly at her nephew, inquired: "Well, how have you been getting on of late?" Henry gave the answer which has been stated.

"Politics. I'm glad of that," said Miss Georgiana with an approving nod. "So far as I can see," she continued, bridling, "you're the only one of the family in the younger generation—the boys, I mean; girls don't count—who cares to do anything public-spirited. You were pig-headed about the arsenic, but you did your best to protect the tombs and to save the Common. Priscilla Avery's brother-in-law was too much for us there. He never convinced me—but he's smart, that Mr. Blaisdell. I consult him now and then about my investments, and they've not done—er—badly." Miss Chippendale winked slyly as she spoke. "But you needn't tell anybody. And that reminds me," she added imperatively, "don't go away after tea until I draw you a cheque—no matter if it is Sunday. It may come in handy while you're in training to become Mayor of Boston. But what I began to say was, I'm glad there's one of the family who's interested in something besides money-making and muscular sports. It hasn't been your Uncle Harrison's fault—poor man—that he was never sent to Congress, and he always intended

that his eldest son should go into the diplomatic service. Although your Aunt Margaret is extravagant, I'm sure he would have pinched himself to accomplish this. But no—your cousin Chauncey chose instead to go into a stock broker's office on the strength of kicking foot-ball (I've never seen one, but I'm told it's a brutal game), and now I hear he's on the high road to great wealth. They tell me too that his good-looking wife is easy-going and athletic like himself—that all she thinks of is how to amuse herself in smart society, and that she doesn't care a button for the things which have made Boston what it is. Heaven knows, I'm not above being thrifty, but there's something in this world worth cherishing besides dollars and cents."

Having delivered this philippic, Miss Chippendale sat back in her easy-chair and proceeded to cool herself with a large peacock feather fan which she habitually used to screen her eyes from the fire.

"Most people think Beatrice charming," Henry gallantly asserted. "She is the President of the Columbine Club."

"I dare say; she naturally would be. That's the club where the well-bred girls ape the ballet dancers—do athletic stunts, as I heard my nephew Arthur call them the other day. There's another case—your Aunt Margaret couldn't understand why I refused to go to see my namesake do a shadow dance—kick her feet higher in the air than any of the others. I don't understand these modern ideas of education. Will it help Georgie to obtain a husband?" she inquired sharply.

"Very likely it would, if the men were permitted to look on," said Henry with a laugh. "It's hygienic—according to the doctors. Besides, it's a part of the joy of living—the modern protest against stifling one's emotions." He uttered the last words wistfully.

"Look at me, I'm strong as a horse; but I never kicked my heels higher than my head in my life, and I enjoy life tolerably well, thank you." Miss Chippendale spoke impulsively. Reflection prompted her to add: "But I was discussing the boys, not the girls. I'm an old woman. If it's the modern way of getting married, let them suit themselves. I'm not abusing them or Chauncey either. Didn't I send him and Beatrice a handsome wedding present—an old solid silver soup tureen? But if any one pretends that they have an ounce of what I call public spirit between them, I know better."

"Georgie is sure to marry; she has had lots of chances. Simply the right man hasn't come along."

"It's her fourth winter. She can't afford to be too particular."

"Perhaps you don't know that Miss Avery has been elected into the Columbine Club?" Henry continued, presumably in further defence of his cousin's wife.

"Priscilla?" Miss Chippendale mused an instant. "She's modern, too—I admit it. What was that you called it—the joy of living? But if *she* should kick up her heels it would amount to something in after life; she'd kick over the traces. She wouldn't execute a *pas de seul* before she was married in order to show how supple and emancipated she was, and then settle down to be a clog on her husband's spiritual aspirations. She wouldn't expect to be decked with jewels and to have three in-door men at the start." Thereupon Miss Chippendale saturated her handkerchief with cologne from an elongated cut glass perfume bottle and rubbed it against her strong nose.

"I know she's very fond of jewels," Henry found himself saying. "She'd expect handsome ones sooner or later."

"Well, she would be worth it. When did you see her last?"

He smiled at his aunt's disregard of logic. "I've just come from her house."

"So it is she who is spurring you on to become Mayor of Boston."

"On the contrary, I am the last person Miss Avery would like to see in that position. She would think of me as perpetually picking flaws."

"And that's what you would do, Henry. Would you have it otherwise? That's one of the responsibilities of the Chippendales—to pick flaws. Men of their sort used to be Mayors of Boston. When your Uncle Harrison tells me, as he sometimes does, that the country is going to the devil, I say to him, 'Harrison, you're a croaker; shut up; I know better.' But as to the city—if I stop to consider that when I was a girl, the Irish were busy laying the sewers and water pipes and the only Italians were the organ grinders —I don't know exactly what to think."

"Perfectly true, Aunt Georgiana. But it's the duty of the younger generation to try to look on the bright side of things." He glanced involuntarily as he spoke at the window, for her words brought back the glittering tide of life which lay beyond the tree-tops. But it was no moment for entertaining such qualms or perplexities. Besides, had he not banished them both from the lexicon of his youth and resolved to put his shoulder to the wheel? "You partly guessed the truth," he continued. "Miss Avery is responsible for my decision to enter politics; but not for the reasons you suppose. I intend to prove to her in that way that a great friend of hers—a man in whom you also have confidence—is—er—an over-estimated person. I intend, sooner or later, to show that Hugh McD. Blaisdell is doing his best to contaminate Boston."

Miss Chippendale sat up straight in her easy-chair.

"Don't tell me, dear, that Blaisdell is a scamp. We know nothing as to his antecedents—I've always said that."

"Not in a money sense. It's not the proper word in any sense. I've no reason to doubt that he is an excellent person to consult as to your investments."

"Thank Heaven for that. You gave me a scare. Only the other day I heard him quoted as saying that Electric Coke will soon sell at $1,000 a share." She rubbed her nose again with her saturated handkerchief. "What *is* the matter with him, then?"

"He is lowering all our standards."

Miss Chippendale frowned. "We can't let an outsider do that. Tell me exactly what you have discovered," she asked, folding her arms.

Henry regarded her almost piteously. "I know you believe in ideals, Aunt Georgiana."

"Naturally, child. All the Chippendales—even Baxter—are idealists at heart."

"I knew you did—and that's why I say please don't ask me now. I could tell you little things—but they're all little things at present. I can't prove anything definite. But it's true—fundamentally true. Priscilla—Miss Avery and I have been at odds over the matter all the afternoon. But she has given me time to prove what I have said, and you must."

His worried yet exalted earnestness was of the sort which his listener prized; it savored of her most precious associations. "You ought to know, Henry. On the surface the man has impressed me as—er—almost a public benefactor, and Priscilla swears by him; but if it's true that he is undermining our standards, it must be stopped, and stopped at once. I shall keep my eyes open."

"Undermining is the very word," he cried joyously.

His enthusiasm was contagious, and the inherent faith which she had in her kinsman was rapidly transforming Miss Georgiana into a zealous ally. "I'll back you up, Henry," she declared. "And I shan't be surprised a bit if you're right."

Henry beamed. "That's just like you, Aunt Georgiana. Most people would think I was nothing but a crank. But I was sure you'd understand."

She deprecated his gratitude by a brusque nod. "It sometimes takes a Chippendale to understand a Chippendale. But if I'm not to ask questions which I'm burning to have answered, you must promise me to try raw eggs."

Henry agreed to do so. At this juncture high tea was announced, and not long after this repast was over, his aunt gave unmistakable signs of falling asleep in her chair. Now and then, however, she would rouse herself with the air of hastily wishing to conceal something, and during one of these waking periods he managed to slip away without awakening her suspicions that he knew. A false step, as he was aware, might have ruined all. So much experience had taught him. He carried away in his pocket-book a cheque for one hundred and fifty dollars. The amount was larger than ever before, but it was no new experience. Miss Chippendale was in the habit of making what might be termed surreptitious gifts to the one or more of her nephews and nieces who happened to be her favorites at the moment.

Henry had not thought it necessary to explain to his aunt that she had given a narrower construction to his use of the word "politics" than he had intended, and that what he had in mind was a closer touch with the practical affairs of the community rather than that sort of activity which is crowned by office. Yet he had made clear that his objective

was to show up Blaisdell in what he believed to be his true colors. It was a personal surprise to him, however, that the residuum left from the conflicting emotions of that Sunday afternoon should be the reverse of an impulse toward compromise. He still dwelt on the necessity of a wider knowledge and a broader sympathy on his part; but not at the cost of the faith in which he had been nurtured. He rejoiced that an outward breach between himself and Priscilla had been averted, through what he admitted to have been her magnanimity; but he realized with growing —yes, with glowing satisfaction—that the clash had clarified his own vision and thereby put an end to the series of equivocations by which he had hypnotized his conscience in order to win her favor. The plausible plea in both their minds had been his own regeneration, and up to a certain point it had been justified. But the limit had been reached; latterly had been over-stepped. Henceforward, right should be right and wrong wrong, and he would cease to juggle with eternal principles. His only hope of propitiating his late preceptress now was by domination, not by yielding.

On her side Priscilla continued to wonder why she had let his denunciation of Blaisdell pass without more serious consequences to their personal relations. Instead of bitterly resenting his vague aspersions as an unpardonable offence, which rendered further intimacy impossible, she had allowed herself to dismiss him on the understanding that he would be free to return on a friendly footing during the period in which he was endeavoring to make good his anonymous charges. Indignation prompted her to terminate the established truce. But such a change of front would expose her to the taunt of not knowing her own mind—of not being able to act con-

sistently on the spur of the moment, a trait on which she prided herself. Reflection revealed to her—though her first impulse was to stifle it as uncanny—that curiosity was really the agent which held her wrath in suspension. The accusation, though lacking utterly in essential detail, had fulminated a charge which was dumbfounding in its directness. It was outrageously false—and yet the remembrance of the censor's tense, almost impassioned, delivery lingered and demanded tribute of her candor. Was such a diatribe to be dismissed without investigation? If she were cherishing a delusion, why should she wait to be enlightened by Henry? On the other hand, the interval for which he had stipulated would afford her also an opportunity to accumulate proofs wherewith to refute this monstrous calumny. Surely a more watchful attitude of mind toward her brother-in-law would imply no lack of loyalty.

As for her own shortcomings, they had been thrust in the background. Moreover, Henry had appeared to be blind to them. She could not enjoy even the melancholy pleasure of self-defence, and without this tonic there seemed to be no escape from her previous postulate, that she had been treading on thin ice and that it behooved her to retire to firmer social ground. In this connection it was convenient on the whole that no breach had taken place in her relations with Henry Sumner, for such a state of affairs would have cut her off from opportunities (which she was beginning to covet) of further association with his mother's circle. Since their meeting at the Art Museum the social olive branch tendered by Mrs. Sumner had blossomed not only in the form of two invitations to dinner at the Beacon Street house, which she had accepted, but by more circuitous signs of approbation—chiefly notice from more or less interesting people—which she had ultimately

traced to the same source. Neither of the dinners was so dull as she had chosen to believe would be the case. The first was ceremonious, comprising a company of twelve. Having been delicately given to understand by her hostess that the entertainment was virtually in her honor, Priscilla had assumed that she would be obliged to sit next to the son of the house, but she had found herself between a leader of cotillons and a rising local novelist. Later it had dawned on her that this self-denial on Henry's part was another piece of delicacy, to save the feelings of one to whom he was so manifestly devoted. Mrs. Sumner had obviously (yet still delicately) intended to afford her a comprehensive glimpse of Boston at its best—fashion and literature, social elegance and high aims side by side at the same table. The second dinner had been almost a family affair, the only other guest being Mr. Moore of the Art Museum staff. The so-called informality of the latter occasion was dignified by discussion which, starting with the elective system at Harvard, had terminated in a plaintive inquiry by her hostess as to why the rising generation neglected to read Scott.

"Tell them, dear Miss Avery, that you are still faithful to Sir Walter," Mrs. Sumner had exclaimed, clasping her hands with playful yet genuine fervor.

Neither entertainment had been hilarious, but each was diverting in its way. Chauncey Chippendale and his bride had been among the exponents of fashion at the first. Priscilla had gone home on each occasion distinctly conscious of atmosphere. The general conversation, though slightly subdued in tone, so that, in spite of Chauncey, it might be styled at times august, had a flavor of its own; a something which she recognized to be akin to distinction and in keeping with the Copley and Stuart por-

traits on the walls, the handsome cut glass and solid old-fashioned silver. She had noticed the heavy curiously bent forks and spoons and the quaint decanters—in one of the most venerable of which the family Madeira was passed around after dessert. Mrs. Sumner invited Henry to specify the date, which he did with becoming reverence. Two or three of the men politely held up their glasses to the light and spoke of the rain-water flavor. But Chauncey, having sipped his, shook his head and whispered in a loud aside: "A bottle of that wouldn't hurt a kitten. No one ever drinks Madeira nowadays except from politeness." Though the upholsteries and much of the furniture dated back only to the time of the purchase of the house twenty years before, they were supplemented by a host of ornaments and knick-knacks of earlier date, which gave to the rooms somewhat the aspect of a gay museum when compared with the space and large effects aimed at by the architects who had furnished her father's and Lora's establishments. But the atmosphere was not to be denied. While breathing it she felt that she was in touch with an historic, if somewhat dusty, past, and on a footing where she was entitled to express opinions concerning the highest functions of the soul and intellect, and to guess who would be the next president of Harvard College. She had not been bored; on the contrary, she had been edified and stimulated in spite of herself. Indeed, humorous as the condescension still seemed to her, she was ready to own that she was grateful for her admission to this inner circle. Had she and Henry quarrelled, would not the upshot have been her expulsion? Happily this catastrophe was averted, and, thanks to her own forbearance, she could continue to enjoy the privileges which had been thrown open to her.

If only Lora seemed happy, she felt that other matters would take care of themselves. The restoration of her own self-respect could be accomplished under cover of the definite issue drawn between herself and Henry, Even to stigmatize him in her own mind as a worm until he had been afforded a chance to vindicate himself would be contrary to the spirit of their understanding. Her brother-in-law was amply able to look out for himself. He did not require a mentor or to be put on his guard. Having succeeded in stifling her wrath—and later, her mirth, at the absurdity of the issue—was it not incumbent on her in the interests of fair play to fold her hands and become an observant but neutral spectator until the day of reckoning arrived? Clearly so, save for Lora's discontent. The growing evidence of this had been apparent for some time, but the fundamental cause of it was not made plain until she happened one day, late in the following autumn, to mention to her sister that she had received a card to the Puritan balls. Then, in a flash, sundry suspicions of hers were confirmed and the true solution revealed. Priscilla had noticed that the morning post which brought her own invitation did not contain cards for her father and mother; but she had taken no umbrage at this. They were elderly people, and doubtless the managers had assumed that she would accompany her sister. It was for the purpose of stating that she would be glad to go under Lora's wing that she broached the matter next day, and when she heard that no invitations had been received by the Blaisdells, her first thought was that there must be some mistake. She assured Lora that the cards would arrive by a subsequent mail. The latter shook her head; it was plain that she was discomfited, but she waited thirty-six hours before admitting the slight. She had come

to take luncheon with her mother and Priscilla, and almost her first words were to ask to look at the engraved invitation. Having examined it for some moments, she passed it back to her sister with the words:

"It's just as I supposed; they've left us out."

The optimistic Mrs. Avery still avowedly cherished the hope that the cards had miscarried, but Lora sternly retorted, "That's ridiculous, mama. It's perfectly clear that we were deliberately excluded. You and Mr. Avery, too. Priscilla is the only one of the family who appears to be good enough for them. I'd set my heart on being asked —I don't care if I do say so."

Priscilla flushed, for the allusion to herself had an undeniably bitter sound, and this was the first time in their experience as sisters that Lora had shown envy of her. At the same time the genuineness of the disappointment revealed by the naïve concluding words made her heart bleed. But her step-mother sprang into the breach, seeking instinctively to pour oil on the troubled waters with one hand and to anoint her daughter's wounds with the other.

"Mr. Avery would never go to a ball unless he were dragged by main force, so an invitation would have been wasted on me. And the probable reason why a card was sent to Priscilla is that her friend, Henry Sumner, asked for one. Of course she knows some of those people—like the Chippendales—rather better than you do, dear."

"I'm aware of that; you needn't rub it in, mama. But these are subscription balls, and—and seeing that they must have known I would like to go and that Hugh is one of the richest and most influential men in the entire city——"

Lora bit her lip to stay the tears welling into her eyes,

a drop from which suddenly falling on the front of her electric-blue waist caused her to pause and wipe the silk facing. She was wearing a brand new costume of the latest cut and very becoming. So her glass told her and the dressmaker had declared. The jacket was gaily set off with silver braid, which reappeared in her blue velvet bonnet in which two snowy plumes waved jauntily.

Mrs. Avery stared in disconcerted surprise. She had hoped her words would prove a triumphant panacea, and it did not now occur to her not to persevere along the same line of thought. "Since you feel so strongly, dear—and it is certainly very peculiar and unjust that Hugh and you should not be included—I dare say Priscilla will be willing to ask Mr. Sumner for a card. She could say that we supposed it was an oversight."

In her eagerness to obtain the boon which the hitherto generous fish had capriciously withheld, Lora grasped at this straw by turning her eyes toward her sister as if to ascertain what the other thought of the suggestion.

The idea of applying to Henry, of all men, for an invitation for Blaisdell was necessarily appalling to Priscilla. But she endeavored to conceal her confusion by replying immediately: "It wouldn't do at all. I feel sure that Mr. Sumner didn't ask for a card for me and had nothing to do with its being sent. I doubt very much if he will go—he is very busy and large balls are not much in his line—and I'm positive that he has nothing to do with the management of these. But the real point is that, if you're not invited, I'm not going. They can't have me and leave you out. I can't imagine why they have left you all out—but since this appears to be the case, you surely don't wish to ask for an invitation, as if it were a favor. If I've a right to go, so have you and Hugh, and since you're not included,

that settles the matter for me. Your friends are my friends."

Priscilla had been talking very rapidly, like one sure of the course which she was bent on following. As she finished she picked up the invitation card which lay beside her on the table-cloth and tore it deliberately into little bits. Thereupon she rose and threw the pieces into the fireplace.

This was done so summarily that for a moment there was silence. As Priscilla resumed her seat her step-mother murmured: "Have you really burnt it up? Your new yellow satin would have been just the thing. And it might still be an oversight. But, of course, you girls should stand together."

"It was splendid of her, mama, and the only thing to do. She doesn't care to go if I can't, and I don't wish her to go without me." Lora's voice quavered, but Priscilla's speech had given her the moral support which she needed. She wiped her eyes with her little lace handkerchief, and, compressing it into a ball, continued: "As you just said, Priscilla, they must take us all, or they can't have any of us, and if they don't choose to do it now, the day will come when they'll have to."

Priscilla gravely considered for a moment this truculent assertion. The note of defiance which she had evoked was so entirely out of harmony with her own purpose in destroying the invitation that she could not forbear to exclaim:

"My idea was that we should do without them altogether. Let us stick to our friends, and—and form our own society."

"That's the wise and sensible thing," ejaculated Mrs. Avery. "I often tell Lora that there are lots of people who

are just dying to come to our house whenever we ask them."

"We will henceforth," said Lora with emphasis. But her elation was only momentary. As she sat in silence, her countenance clearly disclosed that the restorative provided had not brought back her equanimity. Suddenly she looked at her step-sister and said:

"But for me you would have gone to the Puritan balls, wouldn't you?"

"If we could have gone together—very likely."

"Leave me out of the question; that's not the point. And why would you care to go?"

Priscilla, momentarily nonplussed, recognized and for an instant shrank from the directness of Lora's mental processes. The latter took advantage of the slight hesitation to supply the stark answer. "Isn't it because they are the most fashionable in the city? The ones to which people who are not in society are not invited?"

"I had not thought of them in that light. The people who get them up may think them so. But in a city as large as this—an American city—there are various sets, and each set has its entertainments and each has a right, if it chooses, to think that its entertainments are the most select."

Priscilla had started off famously, sure of her footing, but she had already begun to be conscious of floundering when Lora's relentless logic cut her short.

"According to that reasoning you ought to be just as eager to attend the annual ball of the United Order of Washerwomen as any other."

"That would be going too far, Lora," interposed Mrs. Avery. Yet some compunctions on the score of an apparent faithlessness to democratic ideals doubtless led her to

add: "I knew of a case, however, before I came east, of a very rich man who did marry his laundress, and I believe the match has turned out remarkably well."

"If they happened to be my friends, I should be more than eager. That's the one I should pick out first of all," answered Priscilla, so intent for the moment on defending her improvised philosophy that she did not realize until too late that she was merely providing Lora with a fresh opening.

"And suppose you wished them to be your friends and —and they excluded you? Excluded you and invited your sister instead? If Henry Sumner didn't suggest your name, somebody did, and you agree that if we had both been asked you would have accepted gladly. But the same people, whoever they were, distinguished between us—and these happen to be the balls which I had picked out to go to. You know that perfectly well, Priscilla, and there's no use in beating about the bush and talking about washerwomen or even salesladies."

Priscilla found herself blushing at this retort. To beat about the bush was the reverse of her habit of mind, and she realized that, in her effort to be consoling, she had been convicted by Lora of indulging in amiable platitudes and of having failed to bring down even a sparrow for the sustenance of her hungry sister. Moreover, in her secret heart she felt not only wounded because the others had been left out, but regretful on her own account. The difference of opinion with Henry Sumner had left matters substantially as they were, but this fresh discord—being in the nature of an overt act of hostility—threatened to separate her from her new friends. She recognized that it would be inconsistent with Lora's characteristics to submit tamely to being deprived of anything on which her heart was set.

It would have been such a small matter to invite them. Why had they been excluded? But for the circumstance of Henry's avowed antipathy, it would have seemed the natural thing to ask him for an invitation and to assume that her request would be granted. Yet it was scarcely fair without more evidence to charge their exclusion solely to his account. The unpleasant thought insinuated itself that his opinion must be shared by others—others whose point of view was more or less similar to his own. What was there in the Blaisdells or her step-mother which justified the cold shoulder? Priscilla, as she put this question to herself for a second time, took a critical look at both of her companions. Undeniably there was a certain difference between them and women like Mrs. Sumner and Miss Chippendale. In what did it consist? Lora and Mrs. Avery were certainly more stylishly dressed; more cordial and spontaneous in their manners. And even if they had a tendency to overdress—perhaps Lora, at any rate, was too conspicuously elaborate in her toilette—this was scarcely an unpardonable fault, especially as the younger generation, women like Mrs. Staunton Townsend and Chauncey Chippendale's bride, were much smarter in appearance than their elders.

Yet she could not claim that her relatives exactly resembled these women either. Mere surface differences. Priscilla clutched at the phrase. These were superficial—unimportant. Was too much cordiality of manner an unforgivable social blemish? Not they—so she chose to decide—were seriously at fault, but Blaisdell, if any one. Henry Sumner had not spoken of Lora; he had directed his entire charge against Blaisdell. It was his standards and his alone which were contaminating Boston. For an instant her confidence in her brother-in-law quickened

Priscilla's pulses. If it were solely on his account that the invitation had been withheld, there could be no doubt that either envy or narrow-mindedness had inspired the slur. She rejoiced for a brief moment, in the next she stole a second glance at her step-sister. Her gaze lingered on Lora's gay plumage—her many rings and rather ostentatious lace handkerchief; she recalled her cigarette smoking. Could it be that Blaisdell was the victim—the unwitting victim of his wife's lack of social delicacy? Priscilla stared at the thought and somehow—startling as it was—she found it comforting. If true, it explained many things. Then suddenly she remembered again that the uncompromising Henry Sumner had not opened a single crack for the entertainment of such an hypothesis. It was she herself who had chosen to discover and peep through this door and to imagine that she saw something. It was obviously her sisterly duty to close it firmly and to throw away the key. For otherwise she would be between two fires.

CHAPTER XVII

THE suggestion that they were not accorded free admission to the society where his wife desired to figure cast a shadow over Blaisdell's ordinary serenity. It was the first check he had ever received, and it rankled none the less because he was personally indifferent to the privileges which had been withheld from them. Social prominence was one of the logical results of success; and in encouraging the partner of his hearth to cultivate it, he had taken for granted that the fruit of this tree when ripe would fall

into her apron as often as she shook the boughs. He had later perceived, as he supposed, that her lap was already overflowing, and it was a shock to him to be informed that what he had believed to be a genuine product were nothing but dead sea apples. But Lora had made clear to him his misapprehension, and, as was characteristic of him whenever anything became of paramount importance, he began to cast about in his mind for ways and means to ameliorate the situation. There were certain situations which could be remedied by prompt, drastic methods—a pouncing down on the refractory or a fastening of the thumb-screws on the ungrateful; but Blaisdell, after forty-eight hours of cogitation, sensibly decided that this was not one of them. Nothing could be done here on the spur of the moment or by a sudden show of superior force. He must bide his time and keep his temper. He must even for the moment conceal his feelings and display toward those whom he held to blame his habitual urbanity.

For Blaisdell this was an agreeable conclusion. By nature he deplored discord in any form, and, though he realized that the time had come to take account of stock, as he termed it, and ascertain who were his friends, or rather, his secret enemies, he was relieved to feel that a circumspect instead of an openly aggressive policy was demanded of him. To pull any one's nose would simply result in scandal. Such things were out of date, like duels. And as for vengeance—the modern Monte Cristo could not afford to imitate the sensational one-two-three methods of his predecessor. And yet this did not signify that he had rejected Lora's hint of retaliation. Slights of the kind instanced by her were not to be endured. Some sure means must be found both to confound those who had affronted her and to obtain for her all which she desired.

But he would prefer to bring this to pass with a smile on his face, as if it followed logically and neither violently nor disagreeably from what had gone before. The natural sequence of events should justify him—the survival of the fittest. What would it be but this? He rolled the stock phrase over on his lips, for it seemed trebly illuminating now that it fitted his individual case. The days of pistols, foils and arsenic were over. What surer weapon of vengeance than the power to take advantage of industrial opportunities, the boa constrictor-like triumph of enlightened common-sense garnished with good nature?

The affair of the Puritan balls, now that he understood the matter, had the appearance of a slight—and doubly so in Lora's eyes because Priscilla had been invited. Blaisdell recalled with satisfaction that the latter had torn her card to pieces. She had sided with them—but nevertheless, she had not been excluded. The explanation which he had offered to Lora had seemed satisfactory at the time. He had recalled since that, though Priscilla was remotely of the stock of these old families who had preferred her to his wife, she had never courted their recognition; on the contrary, she had appeared distinctly scornful of her birthright. She was so little like them that it seemed improbable that the attraction had been this remnant of her inherited qualities. Unless, to be sure, it was because Lora was his wife, why should they discriminate between them.

As he pondered the inquiry, Blaisdell's acumen halted suddenly before this disturbing thought: Could it be that Lora on her side lacked something which Priscilla possessed. Was this the obstacle? He revolted instinctively at the impish suggestion. His gallantry and pride sprang forward as champions of his wife. With a flash of his

mind's eye he reviewed her social behavior and scrutinized her personality. He was able to detect nothing. Nevertheless, the next moment he found himself placing her and Priscilla side by side in his mental gallery. It was not a new proceeding on his part. From the first hour of their acquaintance he had known which he preferred, but ever since he had felt the impulse occasionally to compare them. Shortly after his marriage it had been for the purpose of applauding his own judgment, and subsequently from time to time he had paused deliberately to note the difference between them and congratulate himself on the soundness of his choice. But the very habit of placing them side by side had been a semi-conscious admission that each was admirable in her way—that but for the one he would have chosen the other. Hence the second impish question which popped out at him like a jack in the box: If it had been Priscilla instead of Lora, would the social consequences have been different?

Again Blaisdell recoiled. But the very practical thought that he was the husband of the one and not the other, enabled him to confront the retreating imp with the brow of a philosopher. They were the antipodes of each other certainly. A woman like that—and as he gazed he called before him Priscilla's glowing yet stately presence—had undeniably certain qualities to recommend her; qualities which, to an ambitious man of the modern sort, eager to conquer the world at every point, might prove invaluable. Comfortable in the sense that Lora was, she never could be; and yet having granted this, he deliberately faced again for a moment—and the experience piqued him a little—the surmise that were this throbbing being in Lora's shoes, the gates, which now were barred, would have swung open at his nod. Here was one of the covert thoughts of life;

a discovery from which Blaisdell in his capacity of challenger of destiny did not shrink, but one which his temperament the next moment made the best of. Were he to choose again—it would still be Lora; he went so far as to assert this to himself, and at the loyal words the imp vanished. Then he added staunchly that, if his wife lacked the art to enforce their mutual rights, he would do it for her If he had fallen short in his mastery of fate, fate should never suspect that he knew, and in the end the result would be just the same—Lora triumphant, and all the dearer because she owed it to himself.

As the matter thus shaped itself in his mind and he turned again to consider who were his enemies, he speedily came to the conclusion that Lora's shrewdness had not been at fault in laying the responsibility for the slight at the door of the Chippendale connection. What was the motive of their hostility? For a cold shoulder was equivalent to this. Lora insisted that Mrs. Harrison Chippendale had never forgiven them for buying the Commonwealth Avenue house. The idea was rather amusing, if true. He had never seen Mrs. Chippendale and he knew her husband only by sight—a slim, dignified, elderly gentleman with an unfashionable hat brim and a leisurely walk, as if time were no object. He had been pointed out to him as one of the Brahmins of Boston—but obviously a decayed Brahmin. Whatever his past, he was no longer important except as a relic; he had ceased to count as a real force, for he was too old to begin with, and he had lost most of his property. According to modern standards, it had never amounted to much in his palmiest days. Unless these people resembled a vindictive clan, retaliation for such a cause could scarcely have been carried so far. Was he not on joking terms with Mr. Chippendale's

sister, Miss Georgiana? And in the habit of meeting the other brother—the more level-headed, taciturn one—at directors' meetings on State Street? As for Mrs. Sumner and Henry, Lora had assured him that they were not to blame in this instance. They belonged to the clan, but the entire clan was moribund. There was only one live person in it—live in a practical, modern sense—Mr. Chippendale's son, Chauncey.

On the surface, at all events, Chauncey was not hostile. He was invariably smiling and affable down-town. When they met it was apt to be Hugh and Chauncey. They sat at various financial boards together, and were addicted to rallying each other—chiefly on the subject of Electric Coke. Banter was this young man's social asset, and he, though his senior, had met him half-way. But Chauncey, though a little light, and somewhat dandified in his dress, had worked hard and shown himself capable of holding on to the little he had and increasing it. He had had the sense or the luck to marry a daughter of the head of the firm—another Brahmin, elderly too, but by virtue of his occupation still in the running. What was the motive which had induced General Langdon and his son-in-law to exclude him and his wife from the nuptials and emphasize the discrimination by the later more direct affront? What could it be but sheer envy? Envy of his capacity for control, envy of his great wealth. It might be that the old people could not forget that his roof had once been theirs; but with Chauncey—Chauncey, the man of the world, son and heir—this could not be the real reason. He and his coterie, no longer the mere clan, but all their tribe—were afraid of being dispossessed in a wider sense if they let him in. And so the word had been whispered from mouth to mouth that their caste must be protected from invasion.

It was a case of decaying Brahminism with its pride and narrow prejudices seeking to stem the current of new and redder blood. Did not any excuse suffice for envy? They could be friendly to him down-town and let their wives condemn his on some trivial point of dress, speech or manners; even plead ignorance of it if appealed to. He had no intention of appealing to any of them. His triumph and Lora's should be like the inevitable march of the tide, the slow but certain sweep of the glacier.

It was clear to him now; his wife and he were the victims of a social cabal. Lora, shrewd little woman as she always showed herself, was right. The conspirators were not one but many. His enemies were a social order; but when the reckoning came, it would be with a few individuals—with but one or two. From a Chippendale he would receive the passport which now was withheld, and the bestowal would not be made grudgingly or in secret. He had no intention meanwhile of altering his previous methods. To draw his purse-strings and cease to play the benefactor to Boston would suggest that he was piqued. He would continue to dazzle if not shame them with princely contributions to their charities and their æsthetic institutions, which they could not afford to decline.

Whatever Blaisdell undertook was initiated by pressing an electric button in his inner office. Through it and the telephone he aspired to rule the world. Sooner or later there appeared his financial factotum, his political man of all work, or whichever one of his salaried agents he desired to consult. They were like so many stops in an organ; he had but to finger them in order to test and play on public sentiment. Through them he had out feelers in diverse directions. His agents kept henchmen on the lookout for promising investments, henchmen whose duty it was to

see that accommodating candidates were elected to the Legislature, henchmen charged with the discovery of impecunious noblemen desirous to part with artistic masterpieces.

Blaisdell sitting in his inner sanctum was in virtual touch with many corners of the earth. He was still a member of the firm of Delano and Blaisdell, but younger partners now attended to the brokerage portion of the business. The firm's quarters filled one entire wing of the ground floor of a new towering building in which Blaisdell owned a controlling interest. Blaisdell's trust company occupied the other wing. His own private offices communicated with both, yet were in a measure isolated. The Cerberus who guarded the approach to them was a tactful and discriminating secretary, the pleasant notes of whose voice lacked the nasal shrillness typical of most American women educated at the public schools. No one saw him whom he did not wish to see, but no one pecuniarily deserving or intrinsically important was ever turned away. The edifice itself was the most modern and spacious of its kind; its elevators rose and fell with well-oiled swiftness; every appurtanance to the building had been designed to prevent friction and promote despatch. Those who entered it for the first time were apt to exclaim, "this reminds one of New York." So it did, approximately; the architect had been directed to produce just this effect. Blaisdell could complacently reflect that other so-called modern offices—like Langdon & Company's, for instance, barely six years old—were already antiquated in comparison with his own.

Such examples as his were contagious. But for his immediate frame of mind he would have been glad to sun himself in the light of this reflection—others emulat-

ing his example, by striking out for themselves and avoiding old-fashioned, conservative ruts; in short, Boston ceasing to continue a "one horse" city; himself easily, indisputably first, but provoking rivalries—rivals whom he was ever luring on to larger undertakings. Until yesterday he would have been content to bask in the warmth of such an outlook. Good-humored still, he instinctively sought to distil from this glamour something to answer his new need, and suddenly he found it. Already there were rivals—two or three in particular. Not to desire their success and not to spur them on would be foreign to his temperament. But every one could not hope to succeed. Some must inevitably go to the wall, for the pace was swift and demanded a steady brain—all the more steady as responsibilities grew. The modern magnate was like a huge ship setting sail on sail. There was a point where another stitch of canvas meant disaster. There was such a thing in high finance as "pyramiding"; known to the colloquial as biting off more than one could chew. Who was the most ambitious of his would-be rivals? Clearly Chauncey Chippendale, in his way. Despite a certain jauntiness which might suggest flippancy to the uninitiated, it was evident, now that he scanned the situation, that this blithe young man had not only condescended to borrow a leaf from his book, but was fast approaching a frame of mind which might lead him to aim at ultimate leadership. There had been unmistakable signs lately—straws, yet under the circumstances, highly significant—of an intention to go him one better, as the phrase is, whenever the occasion offered. He recalled certain recent syndicate underwritings to which Langdon & Company's subscription had exceeded his own. At the last auction sale of Symphony Concert tickets there had

been spirited bidding for the first choice of seats, and it recurred to him now that Mrs. Chauncey Chippendale had been reputed at the time to be the unsuccessful undisclosed competitor. He had been told that Chauncey within a few months had paid a very large sum for a pair of carriage horses expecting that they would be the handsomest in Boston. And there was always Electric Coke. Chauncey never lost sight of or relaxed his hold on that; but was perpetually bidding it up as if it were a matter of pride with him not to run the risk of letting any one else acquire control. Clearly it would not be necessary to egg him on. All he himself had to do was to pursue the even tenor of his way—initiate this, subscribe generously to that, promote, or purchase the other, according to his fancy. And if this would-be rival was really anxious to dispute with him the financial mastery of Boston, the issue would be fate; there would be no malice in it.

Here was a programme which appealed entirely to his conscience—illustrating again his favorite apothegm, the law of the survival of the fittest. The struggle was none of his seeking. But if this scion of the Chippendales were bent on locking horns with him in an industrial death grapple, at least it behooved him to prepare for it.

Therefore Blaisdell, to begin with, summoned and was closeted with one of his lieutenants who dealt in financial paper, and who, by virtue of knowing the inner secrets of banks and trust companies, had, at his fingers' ends the names and necessities of borrowers. When this confabulation was over he sent for the general superintendent of Electric Coke and questioned him more minutely than usual as to every phrase of the business; after which he paid an unheralded visit to all the plants. Six weeks later the "tape" began to indicate some announcement of in-

terest to the shareholders; the stock rose rapidly from 325, at which price it had been stable but inactive, to 460 in the space of a fortnight, discounting the subsequent action of the directors who advocated an issue of new stock on the basis of one new share for every two old—to be paid for by the subscribers at par of one hundred. It was rumored that there had been dissensions at the meeting, and that the vote passed was in the nature of a compromise. The lieutenant who dealt in financial paper, had the correct story which he confided to a select few.

It appeared that, despite the huge earnings, Mr. Avery had been opposed to a further stock dividend, on the ground that a reduction in the price list of the machines manufactured by the company was a duty owed to the public. He threatened that if the proposal of the Langdon following that the capital stock be doubled and given as a bonus were adopted he would resign and air the subject at the stockholders' meeting called to ratify the action of the directors. So far as the necessary votes were concerned, it would have been an easy matter to overrule the wishes of the mild-mannered inventor. Besides, the latter the board comprised General Langdon, Blaisdell, Delano, Coldthurst, who was chairman of the executive committee of one of the largest trust companies, Chauncey Chippendale and a rising railroad lawyer named Spencer. Blaisdell's genial disdain for his stepfather-in-law's vagaries was well known, and the others had expected him to thwart tactfully this startling ultimatnm.

To their surprise, however, he began by making a little speech in support of the old gentleman's policy. He said that in these days of popular hostility toward so-called monopolies it was desirable for a corporation to court the friendship of the great public, and that Electric Coke was

now in a position where it could afford, without injustice to its stockholders, to make a slight reduction in the price of its machines. He went on to state that, while the volume of business warranted a considerable addition to the capital stock, the community in his opinion would be further conciliated if the new issue were offered to the stockholders at par instead of given away. Would not the premium which the stock commanded in the market insure to the shareholders a sufficiently handsome profit? Although Electric Coke was a New Jersey corporation, and therefore not amenable to the local statutes, would it not be more sensible and prudent in the long run to adopt a happy medium between the new strait-laced Massachusetts law, which forbade the issue of new stock except at price fixed by a commission, and an absolute "melon"?

There was no attempt on the part of the remaining directors to combat this argument. Blaisdell's attitude was a surprise, for it was contradictory to the position which he had assumed in regard to former stock issues. But the emphasis which he laid on the importance of keeping on good terms with the public was not to be gainsaid. Both Coldthurst and Spencer were impressed by what they termed, in talking to others, his sagacity. General Langdon, after inquiring a little savagely what inducement would presently remain to the capitalist to risk money in new enterprises if all the profits were to be whisked away by loose legislation, blurted out suddenly: "It's right, though, on principle, may be; and whether it is or not, that fellow Blaisdell has a long head on his shoulders. It'll strengthen the stock in the long run."

The only member of the board who took a rueful view of the decision was Chauncey Chippendale, and his animadversions were reserved for his wife's ear.

"No new pearl necklace for you this Christmas, Betty. You'll have to worry along on the old one, even if you do think the color of the pearls a little cloudy. The stock dividend on Electric Coke hasn't come off. Or rather, instead of selling a small slice of the "melon" for your personal adornment, I shall be obliged to scratch round for spare cash wherewith to subscribe to a block of new stock at par. That's what comes of there being too many envious and radical farmers in the Legislature."

His wife uttered a melodious wail of dismay. "But, Chauncey, I had picked out a perfect beauty. Phipps and Henderson are altering the clasp. They will be frightfully disappointed."

Chauncey frowned. He had the American husband's dislike of refusing anything to the woman for whom he was educated to slave. "Their disappointment won't be equal to mine. Get it, if you choose; but I can't settle for it until the spring. It won't do to take any chances with Electric Coke; I must grab all I'm entitled to, or somebody else will gobble it up. I needed all I have in the bank to meet my subscriptions to two or three other promising things. I dare say Phipps and Henderson won't mind waiting six months."

Beatrice shook her head. "I don't want it so much as that, of course. But," she added firmly, "I want one some day." She had inherited the Boston tradition that it was fundamentally wrong to buy anything for which one could not pay from one's income, but she cherished as a corollary to this the expectation that her husband's income would be large enough to provide her with everything she desired. Chauncey had never been a disappointment in this respect and she believed he never would be. His explanation appealed to her moral sense; at the

same time, she wished to leave the matter in such shape that he would not forget it.

The most significant result of Blaisdell's stand was its effect on Mr. Avery. The inventor's health, never robust, had shown signs lately of breaking down, and he had become aware that, in order to perfect certain experiments, he must husband his vitality. His son-in-law's speech, though it fell short of his own theories, was so encouraging an indication that the affairs of the corporation were not to be conducted henceforth along purely selfish lines, but with some regard to the public weal, that at the following meeting he resigned as a director and intimated that hereafter his voice in the company's management was to be expressed by Blaisdell.

Although an elderly man yields grudgingly to nature's importunity, the first step in the process of divesting himself of responsibility is the only trying one. Having tasted of relaxation, he yearns for more, and presently hastens to strip himself of every vestige of harness. Mr. Avery proved no exception, and, save for the conduct of his scientific experiments, he speedily put everything else into the hands of Lora's husband.

There had always been, dating back to the Dartmouth Street days—and Priscilla, who observed her father closely, had not failed to notice it—a certain suspension of judgment on his part in regard to Blaisdell; not amounting to positive distrust, but in the nature of a spiritual interrogation point, as much as to say, "You are undeniably clever, but—" No word of stricture had ever been uttered, and yet, through all the years of Blaisdell's waxing success the posture had not changed. Now of a sudden all was changed. The scales had fallen from her father's eyes and he saw his son-in-law as he was—in his true colors.

Such was Priscilla's immediate interpretation of what had taken place, and the development gratified her no less than her father's renunciation of his superfluous duties. It was the first skirmish since the opening of the campaign; what would Henry say now? For the only other critic had capitulated—owned that he was wrong. Her memorable mistake had made her chary of deciding what was best for her father, but she had been asking herself if the time had not come when he should cease to attend to practical business details which were never much in his line. His handing all those over to Hugh seemed to her eminently wise, and she rejoiced both on her father's account and on her own; for was not the act in the nature of a testimonial?

The abdication was made easier by the suavity of the beneficiary. As has been indicated, a desire to obtain the resignation of his father-in-law had not been the ulterior purpose behind Blaisdell's change of policy. He had not expected that this could come so soon, and like a fisherman who, having baited his hooks for a certain shy variety of fish, finds that he has landed a stray leviathan, he felt it incumbent on him for the moment to desert his trawls and devote himself to rendering the last moments of the dying monster as comfortable as was consistent with his own necessities. On a certain spring day—which happened to be the twelfth anniversary of the incorporation of Electric Coke—a family party visited the works in Blaisdell's private car. Nearly a year had elapsed since Mr. Avery had been there, and neither of the three women had made the expedition since the early stage of the company's existence.

The weather so far lent itself on the occasion to the amiable purpose of the organizer that, after the tour of inspection, the open-air luncheon provided on a hillock

commanding a view of the valley appealed to the sensibilities of all. They sat and ate under a rustic arbor which, as Blaisdell explained, was a trysting-place for the younger element of the working population. Did not the rude initials cut in the wooden benches attest to its democratic popularity? Below them at the base of a gently sloping landscape lay the factory buildings—the latest two dwarfing the rest—breasting the water power; and from their vicinity an imposing town—the growth of yesterday—yet with its schools, churches and department store, spread itself in the spring sunshine like a metropolis on a map. Already that morning had Mr. Avery been gratified by receiving flowers from the school children and an address of welcome from the chairman of the Selectmen, who had saved until the last his secret that the town which had hitherto clung to the name fastened on it when a straggling village—Porterville—had voted to call itself henceforth Avery. But, though touched and gently protesting, the somewhat dazed inventor did not seem to grasp the full import of what his patient labors had accomplished until he looked down from the height on this panorama of industrial activity. As he sat visibly moved, it was Blaisdell who felicitously summarized the thoughts which were in all their minds.

"This must be a proud day for you, sir. Your life-work lies crystallized in this throbbing valley, but with radii which are rapidly reaching out over the civilized world. And it isn't every inventor," he added, "who can eat his cake and have it, too; live to realize the dream of his manhood and reap a golden harvest into the bargain. We wicked capitalists haven't been able in this instance to appropriate all the pecuniary profits."

"You haven't tried," answered Mr. Avery, wiping his

eyes, and grateful that the emotion which the opening statement had aroused had been relieved by the utilitarian close. Otherwise he could not have found his voice.

Far from uttering a disclaimer, Blaisdell replied: "Let it be set down to our credit, then; the credit of the modern financial world." He looked around him as if to make sure that every one was listening. "But I will not deny that you were astute, sir." Then, as his glance fell on Priscilla, he concluded: "You did not forget that you had a daughter."

"Who needed the money, and who enjoys immensely the privilege of being rich," Priscilla exclaimed with exuberance, as if excoriating some pallid previous doubt.

"And a wife and step-daughter," chimed in Mrs. Avery. "Money's money, there's no denying that. But we managed somehow to get along cheerily on Dartmouth Street; and you mustn't forget, Hugh, that it was there you met Lora. Only think how different things would have been if you hadn't happened to apply to us for lodgings!"

The underlying presumption that her husband would, in such an event, have married some one else, prompted Lora to insert her arm through his as if seeking an assurance that he was there.

"And I don't believe it's going too far, is it, Gideon," continued Mrs. Avery breathlessly, "to say that in case Hugh *had* gone elsewhere Electric Coke might never have existed. The sickly children which live never really know how near they were to death."

For an instant there was silence, which Priscilla broke by exclaiming: "You forget, mama, that neither Hugh nor I believed in papa's invention. It succeeded in spite of both of us. I have always envied and loved you because you had complete faith in him." She smiled fondly

at her father as she spoke; to bear testimony how truly wise he had been was to be her tribute on this day of days.

"Mercy, child, I thought we all believed in him." Mrs. Avery, doubtless, had intended her retrospective survey to be merely in the nature of a loose, kindly reciprocation of the apostrophe which Blaisdell had addressed to her husband, but this averment of her more than frank stepdaughter was genuinely surprising.

If Blaisdell had been willing to appropriate the credit in question, he did not delay, now that he was challenged, to admit his incredulity. "You are right, Priscilla; but I wasn't aware at the time that you suspected it." She saw him fix her with his small eyes, smiling pontifically, as much as to say, "I didn't contradict your mother because I was loath to disturb the serenity of this occasion by introducing a discordant note; but since you have thought best to do so, there is nothing to conceal." This was what she read plainly on his lips; then, as he turned his eyes from her she heard him continue—and this time he was addressing her father:

"Perhaps, after all, it is fortunate that I was in the house, and Mrs. Avery is in a measure right; I was lacking in faith, but when I learned to believe I think you will agree that no one was quicker to realize and to assist you to make the most of the commercial possibilities of your revolutionizing discovery."

"There is no doubt of that, Hugh—no doubt of that whatever," assented Mr. Avery graciously. "Besides, all my experiments had seemed to be failures up to that point. I was sure, but it was natural"—he lingered on the word —"for every one else to doubt."

"Which is only another way of saying," continued Blaisdell, "that it takes two kinds of men to give the

world the full benefit of a great invention. Your part is done; you have earned your repose; this flourishing town below us is a monument to your genius and society's appreciation of it. But on the rest of us—and by force of circumstances on me in particular, rests the responsibility for the future—the duty of placing your gift to humanity within reach of everybody, but without crippling the property rights—in this instance, the magnificent property rights—which make successful manufacture possible. Your sympathies are with the consumer and with the artisan—the under dogs of industry, as I have heard you call them. So, sir, are mine. Our only difference can be as to what will be for their best interest in the long run."

Mr. Avery's countenance, which had looked a little chilled by the reminder that only repose was in store for him, lighted up at the humanitarian allusion. "The responsibility is on you—must be on you," he said. "I am too old, I dare say, even to conjecture what is best. Let me tell you, Hugh, on my side, that I feel safe in leaving everything in your hands."

There was no question as to the sincerity with which Mr. Avery thus sealed his abdication, though it was obviously a sad as well as a proud day for him. His wife as usual was prompt in providing an antidote.

"It's lucky, Gideon, that you've got some one like him to step in and run the business."

This brisk encomium restored the spirits of everybody and might have served as a benediction had not Blaisdell chosen to re-open the theme. Everything had played into his hands; he had merely to accept with a smiling face what fate had bestowed and keep silent. But his convictions were rampant at the moment and he craved the opportunity to win over the economic sympathy of the keen in-

telligence which had just shifted its burden to his shoulders. He pointed again toward the valley. "This town—these factories are only a beginning, Mr. Avery. We who stand here lack the imagination to forecast the future of your invention. You were brought up in the days when every man was the arbiter of his own small business; those days are over—over forever. Our time is to be the era of gigantic combinations which will swallow up and combine rival and kindred industries. A few great corporations will succeed the struggling many, and instead of every man his own master, the business world will acknowledge, like an army, its small group of generals, its field officers under orders, and the remainder rank and file. The world will struggle against it—legislate against it, but in the end—I see I shock you, sir, but wait—in the end this process must prevail for the reason that everything will cost less and mankind will thus be enabled to live more cheaply and happily."

The vigor of Blaisdell's manner was tempered by its persuasive calm. He spoke with earnest fluency, yet without excitement, as if he felt that what he was saying was too indisputably true to leave room for contradiction, although purposely prophetic. His concluding words were almost jocund, suggesting that there could be only one logical answer to the plea of cheapness of production. His physical attributes—his solid compact figure, his full cheeks and broad brow, his firm, amiable mouth and shrewd eyes—contributed to enhance his effect of reserve power.

"How true everything which Hugh says sounds," remarked Mrs. Avery in a hoarse aside to her daughter.

Mr. Avery was evidently interested; caught like a fly in the molasses of the final appeal; but likewise a little bewildered.

"And how does this effect Electric Coke?" he inquired.

"Because Electric Coke must, sooner or later, like every other corporation, swallow up the other fellow, or be swallowed up. Our task will be to swallow up the other fellow." His smile was that of a good-humored but carnivorous anaconda.

"But what becomes of the individual—of the rank and file, as you call them?" It was Priscilla who asked the question. She had listened with fascinated ears to his exposition; but now, as she spoke, there was the solicitude of dismay in her voice and she rested her hand upon her father's shoulder almost in the guise of a protector.

Blaisdell's eyes twinkled with appreciation of her quickness in reaching the root of the matter, and his reply was intended to be in the nature of a reward—a final answer to that pertinent inquiry and on the same mental plane. "There are no higher laws in the world than the economic laws, because they—like the tides and the seasons—are inevitable." As he spoke, as if to illustrate his reason, he tossed a stone which he was balancing on his palm down the declivity on the edge of which they were sitting. They could hear it rattle down the gorge. Then before Priscilla had ceased to muse upon his meaning, he exclaimed: "There is no denying that the most enviable will be the handful of generals and their families. You, for instance, are the daughter of what is called now a captain of industry. Your husband, whoever he may be, through the power which you will be able to give him, ought to become a general. Do not wrinkle your brow, Priscilla. You would have made a highly ornamental princess. I merely mean that the generals of to-morrow are to take the place of the monarchs of yesterday."

"And meanwhile the every-day individual——"

"Will be better off than ever before in his life."

"But if he doesn't think so?"

"He will try socialism, and in the end flee from it in disgust."

"Socialism!" ejaculated Mr. Avery. "That means the death of the individual, too." He shook his head with the instinct of the man who believes in the triumph of energy and revolts from being confounded with the common herd.

At this point the bubbling laugh of the practical Lora intervened and her distinct voice was heard to utter: "What Hugh really means—his moral is that we must all hold on tight to what we have and try to increase it, for the people who fail to do so will soon be nobodies even in Boston."

CHAPTER XVIII

It was Sunday, just after morning service. For the past ten minutes people had been gathering in the cloister-like arcades which surrounded the inner court-yard of the new Public Library—slipping in, as it were, for the occasion was a select one. Those entering had been bidden to a private view of the bronze fountain which had recently been offered as a central ornament for the court-yard. Before formal acceptance of the gift, the trustees of the library had seen fit to take certain competent minds into their confidence, though the invitation contained no hint that an expression of opinion was sought for. And yet it could be safely taken for granted that such a gathering of the leading citizens of Boston would not approach an object of art in other than a tensely critical spirit.

The list had been made out with discernment, for

fashion no less than technical knowledge, Cambridge as well as Boston, unfaltering moral worth and travelled scepticism were each in evidence; individuals might be missing, but every point of view was represented, including two clergymen and a bank president, who, spiritually speaking, might be regarded as an offset to certain members of the Sphinx Club whose shibboleth was known to be "art for art's sake." In all the members of the various groups aggregated about fifty. Standing in the centre of the court-yard, the spot selected for its location, the statue was still concealed by draperies which were not to be removed until the psychological moment arrived, which would not be until certain persons whose idiosyncrasy it was to be tardy had been waited for a reasonable time. The interval thus afforded was beguiled by Mrs. Sumner's two daughters with a discussion begun on the way from church at King's Chapel as to whether it was obligatory to seek out a conductor who had neglected to collect a fare. Marriage had so far tempted—or should one say, relaxed?—Mrs. Paton's point of view that she was disposed to throw the responsibility of collecting it on the company, unless the omission could be rectified without the slightest personal inconvenience; but her sister fervidly declared that the money would henceforth burn in her pocket, and that, at all events, she would feel obliged to give it away in charity. So eager was the controversy that they, as well as Professor Paton, who, in the capacity of judge, stood listening to the dialogue, were so far oblivious to their surroundings, that an agitated "Girls—girls, pay attention," on the part of their mother was the first indication to them that the statue was about to be uncovered.

Professor Paton squared his shoulders and gave his

curving mustaches a nervous downward pull. He was beginning to be regarded as a rising authority on art—one of the younger men who might be relied on to fill the place of Professor Slater, whose fearless critical judgments had long been a purging mainstay to the generation to which Mrs. Sumner belonged. Professor Slater had, of course, been invited, but a cold had kept him at home, so a greater responsibility than usual was imposed on his junior. The latter's work on the Greek poets had necessarily brought him into close communion with the plastic monuments of the ancient classical world, and his marriage to a Sumner had given just the requisite touch of solidity to his character in the eyes of those disposed to ascribe his occasional diatribes to a lack of sober purpose. As the coverings were removed and the statue stood revealed, he gave a start and ejaculated under his breath, "Cæsar's Ghost!" The tone in which he uttered this expletive was one of amazed entertainment—immediate foresight indeed of the yawning chasm of difference of opinion shortly to rend Boston as by an earthquake.

What those present beheld was the youthful figure of a Bacchante in the very act of dancing. Poised on one foot with nude airy grace, she impersonated the poetry of brisk, joyous motion, while her jocund upward glance rested on an infant huddled on one shoulder before whom she gayly dangled a bunch of grapes. For a brief moment there was silence, an occasional gasp as in the case of Professor Paton, but virtually no sound. Some began to cast sheep's eyes at their neighbors, for, in spite of the intensity of their convictions, it is typical of Bostonians—as doubtless of many others—that novelty strikes them aghast in a sense, and they instinctively seek support before venturing to approve or even to blame. To over-praise—to like a

thing one should not, is almost a cardinal sin, and not to recognize what is excellent nearly as bad. So Boston is liable to wabble on the spur of the moment until those in whom she has confidence point the way. Even her applause is always frigid, for her enthusiasm is a product of the brain, not the spontaneous tumult of the heart.

A light murmur of conversation now arose for the different groups were beginning to compare notes. Mrs. Sumner, who had been gazing fixedly at the statue, turned away abruptly. "What do you think of it, mama?" inquired Mrs. Paton anxiously, forecasting, perhaps, a diversity of opinion between her mother and her husband.

"How can you ask, Barbara? What could any one think but consider it—er—immodest?" interposed her sister. It sometimes seemed to the elder Miss Sumner that she and Barbara had suddenly changed places. Formerly Barbara had been the over-conscientious—the strictly sensitive one. Her lack of moral nicety on the subject of the conductor's fare had been a distinct shock. Could this be the result of matrimony? If so, it was high time that she should be brought up with a round turn.

"But hasn't it real artistic merit? If it hasn't that, of course, there's nothing to be said," answered Mrs. Paton, turning toward her husband for support. But Mrs. Sumner did not wait for her son-in-law's verdict.

"No wonder they felt that the thing needed draperies. In my judgment they should never have been taken off."

Apparently oblivious of this incipient family feud, Professor Paton continued to gaze at the fountain, chuckling now and then softly to himself. At last he said: "It's clever—infernally clever, and original. Grace—joy—movement, they're all there."

"I told you so," exclaimed his wife triumphantly. "If it weren't artistic, I should hate it, too."

"Don't tell me," said Lily Sumner with sad sternness, "that you approve of it, Fuzzy." The family had adopted the professor's college nickname.

"Approve of it? Certainly I approve of it—from a purely artistic standpoint. The question is, the really amusing question, will Boston stand for it?"

"Here in the central court-yard of the Boston Public Library, a spot which of all spots should be consecrated to high moral and educational aims? Never; certainly not," said his mother-in-law, speaking with stately deliberation, but evidently feeling deeply. "Clever—yes, the statue may be clever in a pagan—er—Latin quarter sense; but it is essentially frivolous in conception. If there are people who admire it, I should not object if it were to be placed in a corner of the Art Museum, though I should never care to look at it again myself. But here, in our Public Library? I shall protest against that with every fibre of my being. If necessary, I shall write to the *Transcript* on the subject and get my brother Harrison to do the same. It is utterly inappropriate to the place."

Professor Paton nodded. "I'm not sure that I don't agree with you. I'm inclined to think you've hit the nail on the head. The thing is almost a masterpiece in its way, and devilish bold and inspiring technically. But I can see what you mean. The spot selected is not appropriate." He turned to his wife and sister-in-law. "Your mother is right, girls. In a museum, yes; but here—it's scarcely the place I admit. In fact, if the trustees consult me, I may have to vote against it, brilliant as I think it is."

But Lily was not satisfied. "How can you admire it so,

Fuzzy? We know nothing of that young woman's history. What does that unfortunate child symbolize?"

"She's a Bacchante. They were all—er—like that," her sister hastened to explain.

"It's the movement—the unconscious rapture with which she dances that are so admirable, Lily," the professor answered. "Artistically the thing is very convincing; but when it comes to eternal fitness"—he paused and chuckled softly again—"there are difficulties undeniably. Where that is involved, I would sooner have your judgment, Mrs. Sumner, than that of any one I know."

Firm as she already was in her opinion, Mrs. Sumner was pleased by this tribute, for her son-in-law would be a valuable ally, and she was well aware that he was capable of disagreeing with her. Her glance strayed across the court-yard to another section of the arcade where she knew that her son was standing. "I wonder," she said, "what Henry thinks of it." There was just a touch of solicitude in her tone, for she had noticed his companions. But people were beginning to move, and at that moment a little group consisting of her sister, Miss Georgiana Chippendale, Mr. Moore of the Art Museum, Morgan Drake and Miss Winston, secretary of the Mother Eve's Club, drifted toward them.

"What do you think of it, Eleanor? To my eyes that young woman is little better than a saucy minx—a trollop," exclaimed Miss Chippendale. "But," she added and the color of her large nose indicated that she was agitated, "these people are all crazy about her."

Mrs. Sumner surveyed the group with serene decision, though the sight of Mr. Moore in opposition was inwardly disconcerting.

"We are all agreed here—not to like it at all."

"What did I tell you?" cried Miss Chippendale triumphantly.

"Professor Paton, too?" exclaimed Mr. Moore in some distress.

"Crazy does not exactly define my attitude," said Miss Winston in her gentle, worried tone, looking over her glasses. "But I think Mr. Blaisdell was right when he said just now that what we need in Boston is more joy in living. It was a new thought to me, and that fountain does express joy. Perhaps we are too solemn in our artistic preferences. No one can deny that—er—the main figure dances as though intoxicated with joy."

"Joy? She looks to me a little tipsy," remarked Miss Chippendale promptly.

"So she does," assented Morgan Drake highly entertained. "I couldn't quite make out what was wrong about her. Still, I like her all the same; she's so clever—graceful—free—unconventional. Her presence would do Boston good in the long run."

"She doesn't belong in the main court-yard of the Public Library; there's the point, Morgan," said the professor.

"But that's the location which the donor of the fountain has selected. Should one look a gift horse in the mouth?"

"Assuredly, if necessary," said Mrs. Sumner, seizing her opportunity. "From the standpoint of high art—and the highest art must always be ethical—she's a degenerate person. In this spot—dedicated to the people, for the people, by the people—she would lower not raise one's ideal of womanhood and maternity."

Mrs. Sumner breathed more freely, feeling that she had probed the subject to its depth and uttered what would be for her the final word.

"I said she was a minx; a minx is the only term for her," asserted Miss Chippendale.

"You consider her decadent, Mrs. Sumner? I admit that she's modern—ultra-Parisian, possibly. But I am not prepared to agree that she is decadent," said Mr. Moore turning to look at the statue once more and shading his brow with his hand.

"I refuse to think of her as decadent—merely graceful, free and unconventional, as Mr. Drake just said," protested Miss Winston, "and I fail to detect the slightest sign of tipsiness, only joy."

"There were plenty of people around us enthusiastic on the subject—people of various affinities," declared Morgan. "Mrs. Staunton Townsend was praising it to the skies, and I heard your nephew Chauncey Chippendale state to Mr. and Mrs. Blaisdell that it was a masterpiece. Let us hope that this will not be a case where Boston will be shaken to her solid centre. I'm ready to listen to arguments, but, as at present advised, I'm in favor of letting the little lady stand where she is."

This was his parting shot. He and his associates continued on their way. The reference to her nephew was not lost on Miss Chippendale. It was one more sign of depravity to mark down against Chauncey in the mental ledger wherein she registered the faults and merits of her nephews and nieces with an eye to a final trial balance. Nor did she overlook the mention of Blaisdell. She was glad to find him on the opposite side, for it served to confirm the new opinion which she had formed of him. As Morgan turned to depart she nodded her head sturdily and said: "I'm not surprised to hear that certain persons are in the wrong, as usual."

But Mrs. Sumner's thoughts were busy elsewhere. "It

is time to go," she said, "and I don't see Henry anywhere. As Mr. Drake just remarked, if people are obstinate, this may become a very serious matter."

"Considering that he went with Priscilla Avery, he is not likely to join us so long as he can be with her," said Lily pertinently. "I caught a glimpse of them both across the court-yard while you were all discussing the Bacchante. Most of her family were with him. Surely, mama, you haven't any fear that Henry will like 'the little lady,' as Mr. Drake calls her? Mr. Drake is clever, of course, but he's liable to be flippant at the wrong time."

"Ordinarily I should take for granted that he would see the fatal objection to it which we all see; but for the very reason which you have just indicated, child, I do not consider that Henry's convictions for the time being are what can be called—er—stable." Thereupon Mrs. Sumner sighed gently; but accepting the intimation that further delay in the hope of meeting her son was likely to be futile, she proceeded to lead the way toward the exit.

At that very moment the object of her concern was standing at an opposite angle of the arcade, just out of range of the family vision, listening to some very good-humored but explicit arguments why it would be "a crime —yes, an unpardonable crime," to reject the gift of the new fountain. Henry had come with Priscilla, but natural chance had finally brought them both into the company of the Blaisdells and Mrs. Avery. Although the acquaintance of the two men dated back to the Dartmouth Street days, their meetings since then had been casual, and in spite of Henry's intimacy with Priscilla, they were little more than bowing acquaintances. On his part, Blaisdell was glad of the opportunity—for some time he had been hoping for one—of endeavoring to rectify the erroneous impression

which he was well aware that this scion of puritanical, aristocratic Boston had formed of him. Glad to take pains to demonstrate with complete amiability that of their two attitudes toward public affairs his own was the sound and salutary one. From Priscilla he had not gleaned a word of Henry's distrust, but he had divined it long ago. At first it had amused him, then irritated him slightly. Latterly he had felt some inclination to correct what he deemed an unjust prejudice, for though from the point of view of large affairs Henry, in his opinion, was of no account, it could not be denied that the latter was a vigilant individual who never lost sight of what was going on locally. To win him over—at least, to make clear that they were both really seeking the same end, if by slightly different methods—the good of Boston—would be a personal gratification (triumph would be too large a word); and, moreover, it would be convenient to be on friendly terms with a man whose attentions to his sister-in-law were so tenaciously persistent. He had even ceased of late to laugh at her persevering admirer in her hearing for the reason that, though Priscilla appeared to agree with him by never contradicting his animadversions, she still allowed Henry to dance attendance on her, which argued presumably that this captious suitor was not altogether distasteful.

Ever since the statue had been uncovered Blaisdell had been making what might be called a jubilant tour of the arcade. He was so far in the secret of the donation that he had been one of the three or four persons, besides the trustees, vouchsafed a preliminary peep at the fountain a few days previous, on which occasion his enthusiasm had been instant and unstinted. Could any one for a moment doubt that this spirited figure was exactly the central ornament which the new court-yard required? When the

draperies were removed he had taken for granted that there could be but one opinion as to its merit, and he had turned at once to express, right and left, his unqualified admiration of the dancing figure. If he noticed that some of the replies which his enthusiasm drew forth were more negative than the merits of the conception demanded, he set this down to what he termed habitual Boston reserve; and some time elapsed before it dawned on him that the sentiment was not all one way. The first person to bring home to him this knowledge was Mr. Coldthurst, the bank president—one of his closest business associates—who remarked in response to an eager inquiry whether he did not consider it a delightful creation—"on the contrary, if it remains here, our sons and daughters will be brought into daily association with immodesty. Mr. Leonard has just told me, Blaisdell, that he considers both figures positively indecent, and in my opinion that is not putting it too strong."

This from a man of Mr. Coldthurst's position was disturbing, especially as he spoke with unaccustomed energy, for in ordinary daily life he was sluggish in his demeanor. Blaisdell had tried to convert him on the spot by amazed, incredulous urbanity. Did he not recognize the grace and spontaneous beauty of the design? What could be more appropriate for a fountain than a youthful mother dancing with her child? It would give the rather sober court-yard just the requisite touch of joyous animation. But the bank president had shaken his head doggedly and muttered something about "naked figures," whereupon Blaisdell, recollecting that Mr. Coldthurst was a parishioner of Mr. Leonard's and the denomination to which he belonged, believed that he had unearthed the basis of the entire opposition.

"Ah," he exclaimed with the slightly superior air of one who recognizes that further argument would be a waste of time, "you object to the nude in art." Such a point of view was to be laughed at when out of earshot of the prurient souls who entertained it, but was essentially a stone wall so far as converting the individual was concerned.

Blaisdell was bubbling over with the absurdity of this—as he well had a right to be—when he encountered Chauncey Chippendale and his wife a few minutes later. Lora was with him and the four stopped to talk. Doubtless it seemed a favorable opportunity to Beatrice to take a little more pains to be civil to the Blaisdells—a suggestion which her husband every now and then made to her when he came home more than usually impressed by his rival's growing prestige down-town. Beatrice was a little obstinate, especially in social matters, and she clung to the theory that the newcomers belonged to a different set and had plenty of friends of their own. In deference to Chauncey's desire, she had made up her mind to invite them to her next large entertainment, but she had never been able to make them "fit into" any of her small ones. "Of course, the real reason why they don't get on faster socially is his wife," she would remark occasionally in self-defence. "She's pretty and she has lots of pretty clothes, but—er—she's different. A man can be different, but a woman can't."

Beatrice, however, was sensible as well as amiable, and she had gathered lately that she had put off being civil long enough. So she shook hands with Lora graciously as people know how to do at the nick of time when it costs them nothing. Happily they found a common bond in the new fountain. Her melodious declaration that she "loved it" not merely delighted Blaisdell, but thawed the

ice of Lora's disinclination to be appeased by such a minor attention, who also made a mental note that she would "love" henceforth in every-day speech inanimate things of secondary importance. Chauncey likewise was exuberant. "It's a gem—a perfect gem. She's running over with sportiveness just as a fountain ought to be. If the Puritan fathers can see her, they'll wriggle in their graves a little, but she'll do dear, old, sober Boston good." He added somewhat quizzically, "She looks as if she might have been an artist's model at one stage of her career."

A more sensitive person might have found this encomium not altogether satisfying; but Blaisdell did not stop to analyze it; enough for him that his opinion was reënforced from such a prominent quarter. He rejoiced, too, in the thought that this partial tender of the olive branch was an indication that his new policy was working. He hastened to repeat the Reverend Mr. Leonard's objections to the nude in art, and to jest pleasantly on the subject. He found his listeners sympathetic. He felt convinced when he left the Chippendales that the only people who objected to the design were those who, if they could have their way, would put clothes on every statue in the world; and this thought had been uppermost in his mind when he joined Henry and Priscilla.

The first shock to this serenity came from an unexpected source, for when he gaily asked his sister-in-law how she liked the statue her reply was, "I haven't made up my mind." Blaisdell noticed that the words were spoken without hesitation, as if she wished to define this as her exact attitude. In the next breath, however, she said no less explicitly—and she chose to designate Henry with the tip of her parasol—"Mr. Sumner doesn't like it at all. He thinks it oughtn't to be there."

Blaisdell looked from one to the other. It was obvious that the pair had been engaged in a tense discussion of the merits of the fountain, and he realized that he had arrived just in time to bring his jubilant arguments to bear on Priscilla's side—to prevent her from being over-persuaded by her censorious admirer, extraordinary as it appeared to him that she could fail to be enthusiastic.

"Disputing? Disagreeing, as usual, you two?" exclaimed Lora. She also had been nonplussed of late by the continued tolerance of a suitor with all of whose opinions her sister professed to be at odds. Then, with a glance at Henry—"Not like the Bacchante? How can any one help liking her? I just love her."

"There has been no dispute, for I haven't said yet that I like her," replied Priscilla by way of refuting Lora's theory. She chose to add, "I intend to like her if I can."

"And I'm by no means sure that I dislike her, Mrs. Blaisdell," said Henry. "All I maintain is that the library is not the proper place for such a figure." His mother would have rejoiced to hear the unqualified conclusion.

"The proper place? If one has objections—scruples against the nude in art—I can understand that he would think so. But, otherwise, this would seem to be the ideal spot for a decorative, not too serious, fountain." Taking Priscilla's concluding words at their full value, Blaisdell believed that he was giving her exactly the assistance which she required by focussing the limelight, as he called it, on the crucial point. He said to himself that he might have guessed that Sumner would be prudish on just that score.

"I haven't the remotest objection to the nude in art. The finest sculpture must necessarily be nude," Henry answered quickly. Then, as the enormity of the unlooked-

for charge grew on him, he turned to Priscilla and said solicitously: "I hope I made this perfectly clear to you."

Priscilla hesitated a moment. "I'm sure you believe that you have none." As she finished her lips wore a slight smile. The earnestness of Henry's inquiry had not been lost on her. If her answer was in a measure roguish, it was no less in a measure true. Was not this the precise doubt lurking in her own mind? Was not the moment ripe, too, for bringing these two men together—the two men she knew best in the world? Surely each should learn to appreciate the other. Here was an opportunity to listen to them both side by side; as a result, she would be able to decide as to the Bacchante and, perhaps, in regard to various other things.

The equivocation filled Henry with dismay, but to dwell on the precise point was awkward. Surely the possession of a New England conscience could not be synonymous with rank Philistinism. He felt impelled to say, "Pray do not confound my objections with those of the people who take such a stand—if there are any."

This protestation fell on deaf ears so far as Blaisdell was concerned. Lora's remark—which he had listened to with joy—had furnished him with the correct solution and confirmed his own belief; the ascetic Sumner was blind to the true nature of his own inability to admire. At the same time Blaisdell did not forget that he desired to make a good impression. He must convince or convict, whichever it should be, so as to leave no shadow of offence, and overwhelm his antagonist in such a masterly fashion that the other's distrust would be turned to admiration out of sheer gratitude.

"But what other good reason can there possibly be for condemning it, Mr. Sumner? We have here"—and he

indicated the statue with a sweep of his gold-headed walking-stick—"a genuine work of art—modern undeniably—a little bold and unconventional, if you will—but all the more masterly on that account; more masterly and more desirable for the reason that the design is for a fountain—please bear this in mind—a fountain the spray from which will be scarcely more innocuous than the innocent mirth which we see here symbolized. All conscientious scruples are entitled to respect; but surely it would be straining at a gnat were we to throw back this masterpiece in the teeth of the generous donor on the ground of—shall we say immodesty? My dear Sumner, I think too well of your intelligence, too well of your good taste and love of the beautiful, too well of your common-sense to believe that you are serious in your opposition. I heard you say not many minutes ago that you were not sure you did not like it. Come, confess now, that it is graceful and beautiful."

Blaisdell's smooth-shaven, still cherubic face, and humorous mouth reflected closely the inherent reasonableness of this argument. So engagingly was it delivered that Henry acknowledged the magnetism of the appeal by a genial laugh. "I do confess at least that it is very graceful," he said. He realized that Blaisdell was trying to show himself egregiously friendly, and he was for a moment conscious of the traditional coals of fire; but, curiously enough, the final effect of this gracious effort to sweep him off his feet was to intensify his sense of the wideness of the gulf which separated them. If he had not been aware that Priscilla's eye was on him and that he must first of all be human in order to remain just, he would have been tempted to evade further discussion out of sheer hopelessness of being understood. But this would never do; he must rise

to the occasion and meet affability with affability or be condemned as tactless if not worse. Yet the essential thing of all was to convince her; this was the stake, and she was waiting to decide between them. "My scruple," he added, endeavoring to continue sprightly, "is not the one you mention, Blaisdell, but it is conscientious. It isn't the statue I object to, but the location. In an æsthetic—a moral sense—I find it unworthy of being the central ornament of this fine court-yard. It is out of place. Put it elsewhere and I would say, 'how clever and graceful and—from the standpoint of what the artist has attempted—beautiful.'"

"Unworthy? And is not calling it unworthy in an æsthetic and moral sense only another way of saying that you are offended by the nude figure of a young woman dancing with a baby in her arms?"

"Yes and no. I am not offended by the mere fact that she is nude nor that she is dancing."

"And to what, pray, do you object then?" Blaisdell's shrewd small eyes shone with merriment. Such sophistry seemed to him the contortions of a mind seeking to evade the inevitable consequences of its own logic.

"To the artistic unworthiness of the entire composition as a key-note to the place where we stand—a place in an educational sense sacred, and which should be reserved for a work of art intrinsically noble."

Blaisdell appeared to weigh this response as if seeking to state his position in a few vital words. Both men continued to smile, each obviously bent on remaining imperturbable, however much their opinions might clash.

"But doesn't that come to the same thing in the end? If the Bacchante were not a dancing girl—were something different from what she is, you might consider her educa-

tional and worthy? Excuse me, Sumner, but you seem to be arguing in a circle."

"Ah, but you don't understand him—you don't understand him." It was Priscilla who spoke. She stopped suddenly as if the eager words had sprung from her lips involuntarily. But, after an instant, she continued with unabated conviction: "I see exactly what Mr. Sumner means, and I agree with him. It doesn't belong here."

Henry turned a grateful, glowing look upon her. "I felt sure that you would think so in the end."

Priscilla appeared to ignore this tribute. "I hate to disagree with you, Hugh, but the longer I look at it, the more certain I am that it isn't worthy of its surroundings." Although she echoed his own exact phraseology, Henry appreciated that her solicitude lay elsewhere.

"Worthy? Educational? The idea of using such solemn language about such a lovely, harmless thing!" lisped Lora. "I don't pretend to understand you two. I never knew before, Priscilla, that you had a Puritan conscience."

"Is this a proof of it?" asked Priscilla with a rueful laugh. "Perhaps I have. Now that you speak of it, that same dreadful thought has haunted me occasionally of late." This time she glanced at Henry, as if seeking for some one on whom to cast the blame, after which she turned her eyes again toward Blaisdell who had not yet spoken. Content with his wife's acute speech, he stood with a Delphic smile on his countenance, obviously (to Priscilla's mind) passing judgment on her. In the interval he had swallowed his surprise, his surprise and his pique, though, self-analyst as he was, he was barely conscious of the latter. Realizing that further argument was useless, he chose to accept their conclusion—his inability to understand—without a murmur and at the same moment

to slit the thin fabric of their temporary triumph by a rapier-like thrust—a practical reference to the power of majorities. Including both Priscilla and Henry in a sweep of his brow he said:

"I venture to predict that after this masterpiece has been in place a year or so, those who condemn it now from conscientious motives will be among its most ardent admirers, and I expect some day to be personally exonerated by you both."

The slight jocularity of the closing words threw a cloud of dust for an instant around the gratuitous assumption that the fountain was to be a fixture. The two replies came simultaneously:

"But nothing has been decided yet, Hugh. The Art Commission and the Library trustees are at variance. We were invited here on purpose to say whether we wish it to remain or not."

"Your major premise is at fault, Blaisdell. Boston will never tolerate the fountain."

"Excuse me—one at a time, please," said Blaisdell, making a show of backing away in mock alarm at their mutual eagerness. "The same answer, however, will do for you both. Nothing has been actually decided; but the fountain will remain because most people like it—are enthusiastic over it. The Art Commission had only seen a reduced model of the group. I've been counting noses ever since it was uncovered, and I can confidently assure you that you are in a hopeless minority. You two and Reverend Mr. Leonard are practically the only malcontents."

"There may be more than you think. I never heard anything so cool, Hugh, as your taking for granted that the whole thing is settled. And we object distinctly to being classed with Mr. Leonard."

Priscilla's fine face was radiant with the spirit of revolt. Everything had faded into secondary importance beside the galvanizing force of conviction.

"Wait and see," answered Blaisdell blandly. "Wait and see." He observed her beauty kindle under her gay yet resolute mien, but he reflected that he had been correct in his original diagnosis that she possessed a restless soul, which, in a woman, might be troublesome. Thus the foxes in this earthly vineyard console themselves for the loss of the grapes. But his moment of musing was cut short by Henry's rejoinder:

"I'm positive that you underestimate the opposition to the statue. I've lived in Boston all my life—and this is just one of the cases where she is certain to be aroused, if it is forced down our throats before we have had time to consider the matter carefully."

In spite of the gravity of this retort Priscilla was proud of her ally's staunchness.

"Aroused?" exclaimed Blaisdell. "Surely its opponents will not pull it down."

"They threw the tea chests into Boston harbor, remember," Priscilla interjected.

"No; but the public will insist on its removal."

Blaisdell had not failed to notice the insinuation that he was virtually a stranger, and he welcomed the opportunity it afforded him. "As you say, you have lived in Boston all your life, Sumner, and you represent old Boston—the Boston of culture, conservatism and respectability. I am a newcomer, and I represent the new—the Boston, if I may say so, of unconventionality and progress. It will be the old Boston against the new. We shall see who will win."

"Progress? If there is one thing that old Boston, as

you call it, has always stood for, it is progress. It is in the interest of the highest progress that I intend to do all I can to prevent the perpetuation of this decadent fountain."

Although Blaisdell's unruffled demeanor had already reminded Henry that he had suffered his zeal to get the better of his equanimity, he was unable to refrain from this protest. Was he never to learn the art of tempering his emotions? Was it not one of the characteristics of a prig to be terribly in earnest about everything? He checked himself and said: "Very well, then, it shall be the old Boston against the new; I accept the challenge." Then looking suddenly at Priscilla he added: "But I rely on your assistance, Miss Avery. Will you help me to win?"

"If you need me, yes." There was no hesitation. If he had spoken like a prig for a moment, she had overlooked it. So spontaneous was her animated assent that it almost seemed as if she felt this to be one of the few occasions when it was permissible—yes, imperative to show how deeply one felt.

"An alliance, eh!" exclaimed Blaisdell, and he looked from one to the other with a shrewd smile as if infinitely amused, while Lora gave one of her bubbling laughs. Life being full of surprises, he would have acknowledged this to be one of them but for his ancient conviction of his sister-in-law's inherent flightiness. He drew out his watch and said: "Before hostilities proceed further, isn't it about time for a truce? It isn't far from our luncheon hour."

"And as you have assured us, Mr. Sumner, that if the statue remains, old Boston will not feel obliged to pull it down with ropes," added Lora, reënforcing her husband's suggestion, "you must take lunch with us. You haven't been to the house for ages, and now that we are to be ene-

mies, who knows when we shall be able to ask you again. Needless to say, there will be no attempt to separate the allies."

Henry was glad of an opportunity to redeem himself on the score of affability. He felt sure that Priscilla would like him to accept in spite of the opinion which she knew that he entertained concerning his host. "I will come with great pleasure, Mrs. Blaisdell," he replied. A moment later he and Blaisdell were walking side by side toward the exit. The latter had already changed the subject, but was conversing graphically on a kindred theme—Boston's great opportunities if she did not neglect to "gird her loins," and the danger that she would be "pocketed" by the rest of the country if she failed to "keep abreast of the times."

Lora, taking Priscilla by the arm, which she proceeded to pinch, led her a little in advance of the men. "You have always said you hated him," she whispered. "If you take him," she added with one of her musical laughs, "what relation shall I be to Mrs. Chauncey Chippendale?"

Priscilla was too absorbed by her own emotions to pay heed at the moment to this last inquiry, but she recalled it later with concern. "It does look a little suspicious, doesn't it, dear? For this is the first time in our lives, I believe, that we have ever agreed about anything." She paused a moment, and her manner, though buoyant, suggested that she was fully alive to the incongruity of the phenomenon. "What is much more gruesome, Lora, is that this is the first time I have ever disagreed with Hugh."

CHAPTER XIX

FOUR days later when Henry Sumner entered the Sphinx Club at the luncheon hour he realized that it had become a storm centre.

"Wait until you read to-night's *Transcript!*"

"Wanted, a pair of Plymouth Rock pants for the Bacchante!"

"Opposition to the nude in art makes strange bedfellows—Henry and the Reverend Ashby J. Leonard!"

The last of these diatribes proceeded from Oliver Spinney, the poet, who revelled in relentless paradox, and who, as the hubbub subsided, continued with mournful irony, "Now is your opportunity, Henry, to prove yourself not guilty. I have stoutly maintained from the first that it was a forgery."

"The letter to the *Transcript?* I certainly wrote it. Moreover, I have spent this forenoon in getting signatures to a petition to the trustees," answered Henry as he unfolded his napkin. Here and there as he glanced around the table he encountered aggrieved or quizzical glances. It was clear that the sentiment of most of those present was swayed by three or four whose artistic sensibilities had been irritated by his attitude.

A groan followed this announcement, and Spinney, clasping his lean fingers, bent forward melodramatically and said: "What has induced you, Henry Sumner, to condemn a thing of beauty like the Bacchante—the first symbol of emancipation from the hydra of Boston respectability?"

"You know my reasons if you read my letter."

"Burton has answered it in to-night's *Transcript.* There

will be other replies, if necessary. It ought to be sufficient that the Art Commission has reversed its decision and has given its approval."

"Overpersuaded before the extent of the opposition was realized."

"It's a burning question already," murmured Morgan Drake, next to whom Henry had seated himself. "Some of these fellows are dreadfully worked up, and I gather that you're not exactly calm. I'm against you, Henry, but somehow I can't rouse myself to the proper pitch of excitement. I should not object to a real war, if necessary, but this is liable to become opera bouffe if it keeps on."

"It isn't as important as the slavery question; but a principle is at stake just the same." Henry drew a paper from his coat pocket and, looking across the table at Oliver Spinney, exclaimed, as he tossed it within his reach, "You will find there are plenty who agree with me."

"Oh, the lack's in me, I admit," whispered Morgan. "You've found a burning cause, for the time being, at any rate—you and the rest of them. I envy you."

Spinney let the paper lie where it had fallen, but some one next to him presently deigned to examine it and announced for the general information—"General Langdon heads the list of 'we the undersigned' in opposition to the Bacchante."

This announcement was so amazing that it induced complete silence; while Henry looked around him with eager triumph.

"All I can say is the City of Boston is going to the devil," said Spinney at last with mournful truculence. Thereupon, having finished his luncheon, he stalked from the room in order to digest the disconcerting intelligence while playing billiards.

Henry well knew that this was not a signal of defeat, but of an intention to brood and retaliate. Yet the advantage was temporarily his, and the exit encouraged one of the other members to exclaim: "Fuzzy Paton is against the fountain; so are Bell and Mason." The two latter were artists, though of less local repute than Burton.

"It isn't a one-sided affair by any means," said Henry. "You have only to read that list in order to realize so."

"It's a regular mix-up; families hopelessly at odds on the subject," said Morgan Drake, who had been scrutinizing the names. "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

Henry's last speech had been addressed to the table, and George Ware, one of the executive committee, felt impelled to answer it, using Morgan's quotation as a text. "I don't consider the Sphinx divided against itself. The opposition to the Bacchante is—er—a scattering vote. There's Henry, Fuzzy, Bell, Mason—and counting General Langdon, who is a very busy man, as we all know, and may not have given the matter sufficient thought——"

"Chauncey Chippendale stood by imploring him not to sign," interposed Henry.

"Very well, then, counting him there's only five. Who else is there? Call it seven or eight in all, or ten at the outside. It's a free country, so you've a right to your opinions, of course; but how any man who believes in art for art's sake can take such a position is more than the rest of us can understand."

This sentiment received audible signs of approval, and two enthusiasts cried in the same breath: "The Club ought to stand by the Art Commission."

Henry looked, as he felt, imperturbably resolute and happy—a warrior who wore, though invisibly to the casual

eye, his lady's colors wound about his helmet. On the previous evening Priscilla had agreed to take an active part in the movement against the fountain, and had thus cemented her promise given at the library. This had imparted fresh vigor to his spirit and made all opposition seem trivial. On this first morning of his crusade his feet had seemed to bear wings and his soul to be charged with an electric current which sparkled in his eyes and animated him to his fingers' tips. "It's a moral question," he retorted. "If you fellows don't feel it, there's no use in arguing. You've read my letter. It's because we who do feel it are trying to protect art for art's sake that we are determined to have the Bacchante removed from where she stands."

Burton groaned. "A moral question! What is there moral in half the beautiful statues of the world? On the same principle, presumably, you would banish the Capitoline Venus from the court-yard if Boston were fortunate enough to get her."

"No, I wouldn't Burton, any more than you would."

"But how about your ally, the Reverend Ashby J. Leonard? She would be a naked woman to him first, last and all the time."

"I am totally independent of Mr. Leonard and you ought to know it. The great masterpieces of sculpture are moral because in their presence one is never conscious of anything but their beauty. One feels in looking at the Bacchante that apart from the cleverness, she is really a—guttersnipe."

Burton shrugged his shoulders in eloquent protest and puffed at his pipe. He was ordinarily a man of few words and had said his say. But George Ware, who had a sententious style when the occasion called for one, responded,

"Everything which is beautiful and not a masterpiece is liable to be condemned as immoral. So no one but a supreme genius can venture to delineate the nude. On that theory all modern sculptors must have recourse to clothes or starve."

The sardonic laughter which this evoked relieved the tension, for, though no one had lost his temper, the situation was on the verge of becoming strained. "Speaking of allies," remarked Morgan Drake, "I don't know whether it's more surprising that Henry should be keeping company with the Reverend Ashby J. Leonard or that the Sphinx Club should find itself in the same boat with Hugh McDowell Blaisdell. I hear he's infatuated with the Bacchante and doesn't brook the suggestion of giving her the cold shoulder."

The club as a body had hitherto found itself on the opposite side of public questions from the rising magnate, whose name had almost been a by-word at the round table for utilitarian indifference to ideals. Nevertheless, Burton with a grunt removed his pipe to mutter. "He generally does what he sets out to accomplish." Gratitude to his Macænas would permit at least this semblance of a tribute.

The reminder of this one virtuous deed prompted Morgan to add: "That's a fact, he bought two of your pictures—and he wanted me to write a Christmas story which would sell like hot cakes."

"Yes, he does," answered Henry, as if he were eager to face just this argument. "Fortunately in this case he hasn't a Board of Aldermen or a Legislature to deal with, but a Board of Trustees—men whom we know, men who will impartially hear both sides and whom he will find it difficult to control however subtle his processes." He spoke

with nervous directness, and as he glanced around the table he realized from the silence that no one was disposed to challenge his insinuation. "If any one wishes to sign this petition," continued Henry, rising to go, "I'll leave a copy on the notice board down-stairs. I feel sure that some of you men, if you will take a second look at the fountain, will come over to our side."

There could be no doubt that Boston was in the throes of a fresh agitation. Henry's letter to the *Transcript* had been the bellows which had stirred the smouldering mass of public opinion, so that it had suddenly flared up fiercely into two hostile flames. But the material on either side lacked merely a tangible excuse to ignite so thoroughly had it accumulated heat during the few days which had passed since the meeting at the library.

Henry's action had not been precipitate. He had left the court-yard rejoicing in his alliance and confident that Blaisdell, despite his resources, would find himself in a pitiful minority on this clear issue. No revolt was necessary, for surely the trustees would of their own accord reject this clever but degenerate design now that it stared them in the face. His mother's sigh of relief—she had met him in the front hall—was the first intimation to him that responsible opinion could be divided after having had time to reflect. Later it dawned on him that she had feared the influence of Priscilla, but by this time he had been shocked by the news that his Uncle Harrison was among the admirers of the fountain. Mrs. Sumner discovered this over the telephone in the course of the evening, hearing her brother state from his own lips, "It's a little French, of course, and it has a certain piquancy which may offend old-fashioned notions; but you know I always am progressive in my sympathies." Eleanor Sumner

sighed again and said to herself: "Harrison can never forget that he once spent six months in the Latin Quarter."

Before the end of the next two days both mother and son had received other sad surprises. The infatuation of Mr. Moore and Miss Winston was confirmed, and Mrs. Staunton Townsend was found to be in the van of the enthusiasts—a deplorable defection, for Mrs. Sumner regarded her as one of the few younger fashionable women with definite standards. Most serious of all, the Art Commission, whose consent was a prerequisite, had withdrawn its disapproval. Was Boston going to swallow this specious gift for lack of some one to make a vigorous protest? The same thought had quickened and grown in both their minds unuttered, but when Henry, at the breakfast table, had handed his mother the letter, her proud reply was: "I hoped you would. I had made up my mind to write myself in another twenty-four hours if no one else did. I have always relied on your Uncle Harrison to take the proper stand on important public questions."

Henry had burnt the midnight oil over his composition; moreover, he had evolved a scheme of action, in case one proved necessary after attention had been openly called to the lurking danger—a swiftly and widely circulated petition. He himself would devote his personal energies to obtaining signatures. But in order to cover the ground thoroughly, coöperation was necessary, preferably a woman's; two minds were often better than one. He canvassed a mental list of names. His Aunt Georgiana was energetic and downright; but she was elderly and would be apt to reach much the same audience as himself. The desirable person would be some one who would appeal to a little different element—penetrate the heart of the enemy's camp, if possible; and thus reasoning, he suddenly thought

of Priscilla. Why was she not just the woman? Henry's heart leaped into his mouth. He had not forgotten her glorious promise; he had every intention of asking her to redeem it. But it had not occurred to him until now that they might coöperate side by side—he and she alone as protagonists in a vital movement. Why not? She was a Bostonian by birth, and by virtue of her charms and her new position in the community she would be listened to and followed if her enthusiasm was aroused. Had she not just the infectious qualities suitable for a leader? All the tact and fervent optimism which he himself lacked?

Henry did not inform his mother of his choice. He foresaw that she would not regard it as an ideal one; would consider that he had snatched at this opportunity for courtship, whereas his selection had been governed solely by the belief that no one was comparable to Priscilla as an ally. He was so certain of this when he called on her the following evening—the day on which his letter to the *Transcript* appeared—that the customary woodenness which he displayed during the preliminaries of conversation vanished in the fervor of his desire to tell her that no one else would do so well. And yet—which was awkward—he had been obliged to ask for a private interview—to request her mysteriously to grant him a few moments' conversation apart from her step-mother and Lora, for the Blaisdells were dining there. He had interrupted a family gathering, but his cause burned so within him that he felt it would not brook delay. He sought to state his errand concisely (Lora had already divined it and had lisped, "I'm sure it's something to do with the Bacchante"); he referred to his letter and found that she had read it; he reminded her of her promise to help and of the

likelihood of the need; he told her that to canvass for signatures adroitly was an art in itself and that she would succeed where he might fail. He scarcely realized until he was in the street how easily the obstacles which she interposed had been overcome and how almost eagerly she had consented.

He was not fatuous enough—so he argued to himself—to believe that it was a personal triumph; it was merely that she had become a thorough convert to the cause in spite of herself, and was ready to throw herself into it heart and soul. He remembered that at the close, just after he had offered a few hasty suggestions as to practical details, she had made a remark which was wholly unlike her. "But will there not be very powerful influences opposed to us? Are there not so many people in favor of the fountain already that we shall be apt to lose?" Yet, before he could answer her, the idea of defeat, the very quality of doubt in a matter where her pride was at stake, was evidently so repugnant that she exclaimed: "But now that we have joined forces, we won't let them win." He remembered the light in her dark eyes as she spoke, the enthusiasm in her rich voice. "It's a queer alliance, isn't it?" This she had added with an air of amusement, as if she were inviting him to share the humor of it. "Yes, it is," he replied. "We've never agreed in our lives before. But our being the antipodes of each other—that will make us all the more formidable a combination." And then he had felt his features, which had relaxed to reciprocate her mood, grow stern with the same thought which he had uttered at the Sphinx Club on the following day. "The influences will be very powerful, as you say, but this is a petition to trustees—men who cannot be moved except by proper influences."

She had looked at him in silence. He saw that she knew he was thinking of Blaisdell—the ubiquitous Blaisdell seemingly where they two were concerned. His self-analyzing conscience swiftly told him that it was his turn to retract before her grave almost sphinx-like expression had passed judgment on him. What he had insinuated might be uttered anywhere except to her—until he held the proofs; this had been their compact. "I beg your pardon—I beg it humbly. I had no right—no right whatever to drag that in," he said.

The color had risen to her cheeks. It was plain that she had no wish to conceal either that she understood or that she appreciated his self-denunciation. His foot had slipped again—but she had seen fit to take mercy on him, for she replied: "Both sides will rejoice, I'm sure, that only proper influences are possible."

What he did not know was that Priscilla had stood pensive for some moments after he had gone. Then her look of amusement had returned and lingered. Now that she had burned her bridges she, too, wondered at the ease with which her assent had been won—with which she had become his antipodal partner. What was responsible for this? Who but Blaisdell—now smoking in the library with her father, and unaware of the conspiracy which had just been formulated? Her face grew keener at the thought. It was he who, on his arrival before dinner, had inquired a little patronizingly if she still clung to the delusion that the Bacchante ought to go, and who, when she nodded and replied: "I feel more strongly than ever on the subject," had shown her Henry's letter in the *Transcript* which the sharp eyes of Lora had detected. It was he who, while she stood reading the article under the light, had watched her from the hearth-rug with the expression

of good-humored tolerance savoring of reserve power which she knew so well, and who, when she looked up and said unhesitatingly: "It's admirably put, and right to the point. I agree with every word of it," had waited a moment before he replied: "As a literary production, it is very creditable. Our censor has shot his bolt—and I foresee that his example will be imitated by others—and on both sides—signed 'Pro Bono Publico,' 'Veritas' or 'Senex'; and while the long-suffering *Transcript* bristles with communications from the Back Bay and Cambridge, the people who act while others write letters may be counted on not to remain idle. My dear Priscilla, a clever woman like you, one who seeks to keep abreast of the times, ought to be aware that the men who accomplish the things they undertake in this modern world don't work in precisely that style. A letter to the newspapers is about as effective practically as a pop-gun."

This was an appeal to her intelligence; she recognized it as such, and also that he had deliberately afforded her a glimpse behind a curtain in order that she should not fail to understand. His manner insinuated more plainly than his words something, which though intangible, arrested her attention for the first time in their intercourse and brought Henry's criticisms trooping into her brain.

"How do they work—the men who accomplish the things they undertake?" she asked abruptly.

Blaisdell compressed the end of his chin with his hand and smiled enigmatically. "Methods change as the necessities change." He had desired to afford her an illuminating peep behind the curtain, but even a clever woman should be content with generalities. He had wished her to know that labyrinths existed, familiar to a few, but he had no intention of supplying a key to the

maze. "Nowadays the affairs—the vital affairs of every large city are really controlled by a few big men."

"What will the big men do in this case?" Her manner of asking was serious yet arch.

"You can scarcely expect them to disclose the details of their campaign to an enemy."

"Yes, I am an enemy, for this special occasion. I'm squarely on the opposite side. Who knows that some of the big men won't agree with us? And I'm not convinced that the time has come when a strong letter to the *Transcript* won't affect public opinion in Boston. I'm inclined to think, Hugh," she had added with a laugh, "that you don't know Boston so well as you think you do."

"That's a leaf out of Henry Sumner's book. He said the same thing, you remember."

"A leaf! So he did; and he ought to be a much better judge than I."

Such had been their dialogue. Yes, it was he who had egged her on, whose serene self-confidence had added fresh fuel to the fire of conviction. That look when for a moment he had lifted the veil as if he wished to reveal and share with her his inmost secrets had thrown a shadow on her soul—a shadow which had deepened as she listened to Henry's sinister insinuation, and then had faded away before the specific comfort which the same speech provided. Whatever the current methods—influences—which her ally deplored, he, their strongest censor, had not only spontaneously admitted that he would be unable to derive proofs of their existence from this special encounter where she had taken sides, but also that in this case, if relied on, they must necessarily prove unavailing. Therefore her final words to her antipodal partner (she rejoiced in the phrase) had been those of relief. She had heard from his

own lips that she might relax for a little the vigilance which he had forced her to maintain since the day when she had listened to his nameless unproved charges. Not that she believed for an instant a single one of them to be true, but she rejoiced in the license to give herself up to the new-found joy of this prospective game of battledoor and shuttlecock without a cloud on the horizon of her feminine ardor for the fray.

Priscilla awoke three days later to find that the labor of conviction to which she had thus pledged her energies was no sinecure. The artist, Burton's answer to Henry's letter in the *Transcript*, was supplemented by two other replies from independent scources, and in the same issue appeared a fierce denunciation of the fountain on the score of impropriety signed by Reverend Mr. Leonard. As Morgan Drake had predicted, the Bacchante had become a burning question, and Boston was shaken to its solid centre by the convulsion of two contending forces which sought supporters in every direction. A counter petition was in circulation engineered by a committee of which Oliver Spinney was the chairman, and no time was to be lost—so Henry informed her over the telephone. A house-to-house canvass in her most becoming frock and with her most engaging manners—this was what she suddenly found herself committed to; and when she was not thus employed, it was necessary to be closeted with Henry in order to compare notes and circumvent the activity and wiles of their opponents. Priscilla had scarcely bargained for such prominence; yet it was clearly no time to withdraw. Moreover, alas! (she insisted on the interjection), she had no wish to; every day increased her ardor, and every fibre of her being was tense with the certainty that they were in the right—absolutely in the right. But, though she had

scarcely time to breathe, she recognized that the spur which was driving her on was the despised New England conscience. Yes, she and Henry were tarred with the same brush. He was still infinitely the worse—but they had become pals through sheer destiny. It was fate—her heritage, her cross, and she must make the best of it. And the best for the time being appeared to be to follow its behest and eat every word which she had hitherto uttered against those who chose to be censors and to clog the wheels of progress. Oh, the humor of it! But was not her downfall lamentably sad?

Meanwhile the contest waxed in intensity every hour. Numerous recruits were at Priscilla's beck and call, and she had sage counsellors at her elbow. Miss Georgiana Chippendale pledged not only her time, her horses and her money, but sacrificed her principles by having a telephone put into her house in order to be in constant touch with the two leaders. She wrote notes and made personal visits; she fumed against her nephew Chauncey, and she declined to receive her brother Harrison when he called, declaring that, like the action of waves upon a rock, his life-long habit of catering to radical ideas had eaten away his moral tissue. From Mrs. Sumner Priscilla received daily suggestions over the telephone, and twice she went to the Beacon Street house to talk over the situation with her and her two daughters. Both of the latter were soliciting signatures. Mrs. Paton was covering Cambridge, arguing that questions of eternal fitness knew no local boundaries. Her sister Lily had joined forces with their cousin Margaret, the only one of the Harrison Chippendale family who had remained true, so Mrs. Sumner phrased it, to the family traditions. Margaret and her sister Dorothy were canvassing as rivals among their common

acquaintance; and one day at luncheon at the house Priscilla found her allies agog at the news that Georgy—Aunt Georgiana's namesake and the beauty of the family—had not only inaugurated the plan of an indignation meeting of the admirers of the fountain, but had arranged a personal interview with Mr. Blaisdell and persuaded him to preside. Margaret, who, as we know, had a conscientious aptitude for bringing up topics for conversation at family meals, disclosed the facts with an air of triumph, certain of the sensation they would create.

"Only think," she said, "Georgy called on him, though mama doesn't know Mrs. Blaisdell, and she says he's charming. Chauncey knows him down-town and thinks he's the best possible person to be chairman because of his energy and resources. I don't know exactly what 'resources' means. I wonder what Aunt Georgiana will say. You know she chopped round not long ago and hasn't a good word now for Mr. Blaisdell. Oh, I forget; he's a relation of yours, Miss Avery," she suddenly exclaimed aghast, warned by a strong pressure of Lily's foot. "I'm dreadfully sorry."

"Yes, he's my brother-in-law and I admire him greatly. But on this occasion we don't agree. He's a great card, I fear. His enthusiasm is contagious, and is certain to rouse the meeting."

Mrs. Sumner sighed majestically. "I wish he were on our side." This from her was indeed a concession. That which she added in the next breath was well calculated to shock those who knew her to be a scrupulously law-abiding and temperate woman. "If it weren't undignified, I would like to break up the meeting."

The failure of her daughters to administer a reproof was

the best evidence of the tensity of the situation. "The first citizens, disguised as Indians, threw the tea chests overboard—once." It was Lily who spoke.

"I found myself saying the same thing the other day," Priscilla could not refrain from remarking.

Doubtless the reminder that a comparative stranger was a witness to her hint at violence and disposed to become an accomplice caused Mrs. Sumner to recollect what she really stood for. "It's out of the question," she said. "We must be aggressive, but moderate. They have a right to organize as well as we. But," she added, fingering nervously the long gold chain which confined her glasses, "we must watch and meet every move on their part, Miss Avery—Priscilla. Did you read, my dear, the editorial in this morning's *Harbinger?* Henry believes that it was inspired, as he calls it—paid for. Oh, I despise with all my soul a sheet which utters one sentiment in its news columns and nullifies it on the editorial page.

"Who dares think one thing and another tell
My heart detests him as the gates of hell."

Priscilla was thrilled by the spirited dignity with which her hostess uttered the quotation. Was it Pope? The people with New England consciences at least were sure of their quotations. So she reflected and at the same moment replied: "Your son called the editorial to my attention. He mentioned no names, did not even hint. But I taxed the person who I thought might have inspired it—my brother-in-law. He didn't write it, but he didn't try to conceal that he knows who did and that he can pull other —er—strings if he chooses—as if we were so many puppets." Priscilla quailed before the ring of her own phrase-

ology. Could it be possible that she was speaking thus of Blaisdell? She had taken pains also to exculpate Henry from partnership in the charge.

Mrs. Sumner shuddered. "It is the time for all people who can see straight to stand shoulder to shoulder. I am glad that the clergy are roused and have organized."

"I wish we could do without them, mama," said Mrs. Paton. "They are likely to misrepresent us."

"The important thing, my child, is to get rid of the fountain. It will be time enough then to analyze the causes which led to that result."

"Besides, I tell everybody," said Lily, "that we do not object to 'the little lady' because she is nude."

"A great deal will depend on the result of the discussion at the Mother Eve's Club," said Mrs. Sumner, laying her hand gently on Priscilla's sleeve. "Miss Winston, of course, has many followers; but I shall speak myself, and you must certainly do so."

Priscilla found herself consenting—like clay in the hands of the potter, as she afterward reflected. If she chose to believe that the promise had been extracted from her, she knew as she faced the meeting four days later, that she was tasting the joys of combat, as well as fulfilling her pledge. On the occasions when she had spoken at the Mother Eve's Club she had been conscious of listeners. She coveted the art of speaking well on her feet; it was so eminently practical. She would say what she had to say in no diffident, mealy-mouthed manner; she would make herself thoroughly audible; every one should feel at all events that she harbored no "ifs" and "buts," and that she had complete faith in her cause. Blaisdell had taught her this at least. There she ought to have the advantage of Miss Winston, whose voice was feeble from recurring

laryngitis and who always qualified her utterances from a constitutional fear of over-statement.

It could be said fairly of exciting debates at the Mother Eve's Club that it was in order for every one to talk at once. More strictly speaking, it was out of order, but the habit. No one forbore to talk or felt constrained to listen because some other woman appeared to hold the floor, unless the spirit moved. And the spirit rarely moved except in the case of a few individuals who towered rhetorically above the rest. Mrs. Sumner and Miss Winston were both among these privileged speakers, the former as a woman of aristocratic traditions who cherished lofty ideals, the latter as a subtle thinker capable of nice discriminations. Yet habitually privileged as they were, so intense was the feeling on this occasion that neither escaped interruptions. At the moment when Mrs. Sumner was explaining in her stately way why the statue was intrinsically unworthy, no less than three other members forgot themselves so far as to address those nearest them in excited tones. In the case of Miss Winston, who depended largely for her effect on closely reasoned logic, the noise was even more disconcerting. If Mrs. Sumner had looked affronted, she appeared distressed. The secret sense of the meeting was that neither had done herself justice; that the question was left just where it had been before they began to speak.

Priscilla had scarcely opened her lips before there was a lull, which became complete as she proceeded. Those who listened, if they sought a reason why their regular orators had seemed labored, must have concluded that in comparison with her they were old-fashioned. She spoke so simply, so forcibly, so clearly, so enthusiastically, and so briefly. Every woman in the room could hear each word

without straining her ears, and she showed no affectations. Even those who purposed to scoff or to interrupt were spellbound and held their peace; she had finished and resumed her seat before they had recovered from their fascination. Then the hubbub was renewed, but with a difference. The tide had been turned; the waverers had been won over. When the vote was taken five minutes later the Mother Eve's Club had committed itself against the Bacchante—by the vote of 56 to 41—one of the largest meetings in its history. For Priscilla it was a personal triumph. Her confederates flocked around her to press her hand, and Mrs. Sumner whispered, "When they treated me so rudely, child, I feared that the day was lost, but you were a host in yourself. I have never seen the club so agitated over anything."

So much was gained, and somewhat, Priscilla could feel, by her personal efforts. But the Mother Eve's Club was only one of many forces. On the same side were most of the clergy, half of the art critics, and many representative citizens; against these were arrayed other representative citizens, the rest of the art critics and the majority of the Sphinx Club. Every day some new body—male or female in its membership—put itself on record for or against. Every one of any importance and hundreds of none had been canvassed to express an opinion. If they "hedged," like Mrs. Paul Dudley, for instance, they were pilloried in the minds of both factions. Each side had its monster petition, the result of many comings and goings by a well-organized if hysterical staff. Priscilla herself was the custodian of the one and Oliver Spinney of the other. Thus far the trustees had given no indication as to their probable action; presumably they were waiting for these formidable documents which were known to be nearly ready for sub-

smiles and knowing insinuations of responsibility were not wrung from him by taxing, but were deliberately proffered to her as if to repeat his good-humored warning that her cause was doomed to defeat and, like a juggler brimming over with affability, to let her see the cards disappearing up his sleeve. Did he control certain newspapers? Unquestionably; why not? Were certain organizations of which he was the financial mainstay clamorous for the retention of the fountain? So it seemed; he gloried in the fact. Was the uglier rumor true that certain impecunious individuals both down-town and up were giving their whole time to canvassing signatures? His twinkling eyes did not deny the soft impeachment; was not the laborer worthy of his hire?

Priscilla refrained from stopping to think. If her former champion refused to disclaim responsibility for certain results, she was exonerated from doing so for him. If it were no time for love affairs—as surely it was not—it was none for passing judgment, simply time for accepting live facts and endeavoring to counteract or minimize their influence. Thus she not only found herself able to listen calmly to the evidence which Henry accumulated down-town, but she did not shrink from formulating for his ears the hints which Blaisdell let fall. If she needed a stimulant, Hugh's continuous serenity, which never wavered, provided one. He seemed to regard them both as children.

A week after the vote at the Mother Eve's Club Henry came in one afternoon for his daily confabulation with a light in his eyes which told her that he had something important to divulge.

"I have challenged your brother-in-law," he said, "to a joint debate before the trustees of the library." He waited a moment evidently expecting the surprise which

Priscilla did not attempt to conceal. "My only fear is that he will not accept."

"Why shouldn't he accept?"

"Because he professes to make fun of the opposition; to think us—especially me, of no importance."

Priscilla drew a long breath. "That has been his constant attitude—and a very provoking one."

"My only hope is that, realizing his inability in this case to manipulate the strings, he may decide that to crush me in the presence of all Boston is his best opportunity."

"I see." There was just a shade of consternation in her tone which, far from resenting, he deliberately catered to by adding, "I am fully alive to the risk—the inequality between us. I am only David with a sling and he is a modern giant."

"You do look like David; you certainly do." The comparison evidently entertained and appealed to her. "And to tell the truth, Hugh has in this instance behaved like a Philistine—a modern Philistine."

"I think so, of course." A moment later he said: "You would present the case more effectively than I; I know that perfectly well. But I couldn't make up my mind to abdicate; for even if this were the occasion on which a woman should take the leading part, I covet this particular opportunity."

He, the prudent, was throwing prudence to the winds; he, the conventional, was staking their cause on a single chance; he, her ally, had acted without consulting her. "I? I should remain tongue-tied before the magnetism of this modern Goliath. On what do you rely for a sling, David?" Priscilla did not disguise that she had become the doubter now.

"On the mere truth. The time has never been when Boston would not listen to and heed the truth clearly stated."

A Puritan David truly! His expression recalled to her the statues of the minute men of Concord, the old-time photographs of the young volunteers of '61 in their regimentals; there was the same ascetic, resolute ardor, the same wistful austerity. His observant eagle profile was radiant with a familiar poetry—a poetry to which she had chosen to be blind. He stood like his forbears for fighting for the truth as he saw it, and—strange irony of destiny—that transfigured gaze bade her plainly understand that the image of her, the despiser of his creed, was imprinted on the fabric of his cause. It bade her understand that for her sake he had risked all—even the truth for which he stood—on one hazard. A desperate hazard truly, of which he would make her the scapegoat, if all were lost. Priscilla smiled to herself; then, as she regarded her suitor, this verse long dormant—her father had taught it to her when a little girl—stole into her thoughts.

> "Though love repine and reason chafe,
> There came a voice without reply—
> 'Tis man's perdition to be safe
> When for the truth he ought to die.'"

It was not for her to interfere or criticise. It was all of his doing; he had issued the challenge without consultation and of his own free will. If he and her cause—their cause—were doomed to defeat, she had at least this to comfort her—that he had shown himself unjustifiably rash but commendably human.

CHAPTER XX

It was Blaisdell's abiding conviction that, had he not been summoned hastily from the meeting where he and Henry had agreed to lock horns in joint debate, the Bacchante would never have been removed from Boston.

His speech had been nipped in the bud at the critical moment. All Boston was present. Henry, the challenger, had spoken for three-quarters of an hour, and his turn to reply had come. He had begun by classing his opponent with those who deemed the fountain "unworthy" because of the nudity of the central figure and who would fain clothe all masterpieces. At this point Henry had sprung to his feet and lost his temper, as he had hoped.

"You know better, Mr. Blaisdell. I have more than once explained to you that Mr. Leonard's objections to the fountain and ours—those of the citizens whom I represent—have very little in common.'

This had given Blaisdell the opening which he desired. The censorious Sumner could always be counted on to display sooner or later a lack of tact. "You have interrupted me," he resumed, "though I never once interrupted you during the course of your eloquent peroration. But I welcome the interruption; for, if I do not mistake the murmurs which your last remark has called forth—. Another interruption? Certainly; I yield the floor for a moment with pleasure to my friend, Mr. Coldthurst, whose voice I recognize."

"I rise merely to state that I hold in my hand a petition signed by over 4000 men and women of Boston who are not afraid to put themselves on record as opposed to the nude in art if this statue is to be recognized as a masterpiece. That's all."

"I see I am not mistaken. I see, too, that the gentleman—my friend—who has just sat down has the complete courage of his convictions—which it seems that his allies have not. A house divided against itself cannot stand." Blaisdell had been looking over the heads of Henry's adherents to that part of the hall occupied by the faction to which Mr. Coldthurst belonged. Turning now so that he squarely faced the trustees he had continued with telling emphasis. "But I have the boldness to assert—if it be boldness—that there is no division between them. The reason for the opposition of each is identical, though one of them may call it by a different name. There is such a condition as self-deception—honest, but none the less palpable self-deception. I intend to analyze the argument of my predecessor and to make clear to you beyond the shadow of a doubt that it is because this masterpiece —I do not shrink from the word—represents the nude with convincing but unconventional freedom that it is repugnant to these gentlemen and ladies from the Back Bay as well as to the 4000 signers who condemn it openly on that score. I will make this so evident before I finish that I shall not be surprised if some of these true lovers of art —as I believe them to be—ask permission to sign our petition in order not to remain longer in the same boat with my friend Mr. Coldthurst."

As he paused Blaisdell had turned an amiable side glance in Henry's direction as if he expected—perhaps hoped for—another ebullition of temper, and at that very moment some one had plucked his sleeve and he had been informed of the imperative summons from home; Lora was gravely ill and he must come at once.

His wife had been ailing for several days, and during the last twenty-four hours she had suffered considerable

pain. Attendance at the meeting, to which she had been gaily looking forward, had been tabooed by the physician who hinted at appendicitis. Her mother had remained at her bedside to keep her company, and though Blaisdell suspected when he read the note which the messenger brought that Mrs. Avery had magnified the gravity of the case, he could not disregard the mandate to the effect that Lora must be operated on that night and he must come without delay. It was very unfortunate, for who should take his place? There were half a dozen of his confederates bubbling over with enthusiasm. He ran through their qualifications hastily in his mind. Burton? Spinney? Chauncey Chippendale? No one of them had seemed to him exactly the man. He himself was the only person thoroughly prepared; he had been looking forward to toying with and finally crushing Priscilla's ally as a cat disposes of a mouse. And yet, as a generous antagonist, he was ready to admit that Henry had acquitted himself more convincingly and less like an amateur than he had expected. So much the more reason for endeavoring to make him lose his temper. So much the greater need of an adequate presentation of their case. Postponement? It was imperative to strike while the iron was hot, for they could never hope for another such crowded meeting. An adjournment to enable him to complete his argument would put a damper on their cause. So reflecting, he had made his excuses to the trustees, and on the spur of the moment had suggested to his flustered associates, "Why not Chauncey Chippendale?" The latter was as likely as any of the others to make a creditable showing. If the effort were a success, Chauncey would owe the opportunity to him. If the Bacchante were banished from Boston, Chauncey's prestige must inevitably suffer.

The Bacchante had been banished from Boston. Even the poignant distress of the last month had not rendered Blaisdell impervious to the smart of defeat—failure in carrying out what he had set his heart on performing. Indeed, the decision of the trustees had not been rendered until after the first agony of his bereavement was over and he had lifted his disconsolate head to face the world alone. Lora—his little Lora, was dead—buried in Mt. Auburn, and one of the consequences of her fatal illness in his eyes had been the triumph of the narrow-minded element in Boston over those who, like himself, were striving to eradicate provincialism.

Death was one of the forces of life which Blaisdell hitherto had disregarded. Not only were his affections grievously wounded, but destiny had dealt him a buffet between the eyes and his relations with her were strained. It was no comfort to him to be informed that no human power could have saved his wife; that, although one of the most skilful of surgeons had performed the operation within an hour after his hurried return from the trustees' meeting, the abscess had already broken and blood poisoning begun to set in. As he looked at Lora in her casket—Blaisdell preferred a casket as being less funereal and stiff than "coffin," just as he fancied the phrase "floral tributes"—he shrank from the appalling knowledge that his gay-hearted, sensible, practical little wife would never speak again. How devoted she had been to him! She worshipped the ground he trod on; and he had idolized her. How she loved life! And how cruel, how incomprehensible that she should be snatched away just as her ambitions were about to be realized and her complete happiness assured.

Blaisdell brushed away the tears which welled into his eyes at this reminder that Lora's last days had been em-

bittered—yes, embittered—by that same Boston provincialism. There were scores to be settled when she had been laid to rest. But for the moment the last sad rites must be considered; he wished her to have a lavish funeral —a beautiful funeral. When his mother-in-law inquired whether he desired to have inserted in the newspaper notice "friends are kindly requested not to send flowers," he almost fiercely answered: "Buried without flowers? The darling delighted in flowers, as she did in everything bright and joyous and wholesome. There shall be flowers everywhere, and the more who send them, the more she would be pleased."

"I told Priscilla so. She had a notion that Lora might like it the other way—or—as is usual now on the Back Bay."

"Because they are all so bent on stifling their emotions —so afraid of letting the milk of human kindness have full sway. I shall be glad if every one in Boston who knew Lora feels impelled to testify by floral tributes what a dear little woman she was." Then after a pause, he inquired suddenly: "Priscilla suggested that? I don't understand what has come over Priscilla lately. One would suppose that she would like to have the final leave-taking as bright and beautiful as we can make it—and the dear one would have us make it." Blaisdell's heart ached. His stepsister's manifest and freely proffered sympathy had already been a great comfort to him. But this discord gave a fresh wrench to his nerves. What had possessed her to take such a distorted view?

"She said something," continued Mrs. Avery, "to the effect that when every Tom, Dick and Harry sends them, flowers become an intrusion. I guess, though, that even Boston exclusiveness can't dam up human sympathy."

"Amen!" murmured Blaisdell, for his mother-in-law had condensed his own sentiments into an epigram.

Boston had risen nobly to the occasion. At least, it seemed so to the sorrowing husband and mother. "How shocking the death of poor little Mrs. Blaisdell with everything to live for and two children of the age when they most need a mother's care; and she was just beginning to be known socially! Isn't it sad?"—such was the commiserating comment which ran from lip to lip among those who heard the tidings. One touch of nature makes the whole Back Bay kin; and even to those who looked askance at Lora's aggressiveness, the circumstances seemed unusually pathetic. She was so young and pretty, and if she had lived, there was no knowing what her husband's marvellous capacity for money-making, combined with her own clothes, might have secured for her. Hers was one of the cases where people went out of their way, as Morgan Drake put it, to send flowers. In saying so he recalled how he had shuddered some years previous when Blaisdell, speaking of the death of a common acquaintance, had said: "I didn't know him well enough to go to the funeral, but I sent some roses." Well-bred Boston did not thus overstep the mark, but some, who felt in their hearts that they had been, perhaps, a little hard on Lora, decided to do both after making sure from a perusal of the *Transcript* that they would not be taking a liberty. On the other hand, Blaisdell's intimate friends down-town—his partner Delano and Mr. Coldthurst and Mr. Spencer for instance—ordered elaborate floral designs. They wished to do the handsome thing and they knew instinctively that Blaisdell, who had been their benefactor on many occasions, would expect it on this day of great tribulation.

The roses sent by Mr. and Mrs. Chauncey Chippendale

were in perfect taste but the most exquisite of their kind. Miss Georgiana had temporarily dismissed her prejudices and sent a wreath of ivy—on the plea of her affection for Priscilla. Trinity Church was crowded. Reporters, all of them known personally to Blaisdell, were present with their note-books. The chancel was a mass of color—the work of professional decorators supervised by Priscilla, and the singing was a conspicuous feature. There was a moment when Blaisdell's mood inclined him to dispense with every form of mourning. "She has a smile on her lips—she looks as though she were asleep. We will have no dirges—only joyous music," he said. Then he broke down before the silence of the dead and suffered the conventionalities to be observed. It was an impressive funeral. The newspapers gave space to it and mentioned the names of those present from diverse walks of life. That portion of Boston which had never heard of Mrs. Hugh McDowell Blaisdell surmised that some one out of the common had died, and among that portion which had there were some who, after a decent pause, ventured to wonder out loud in the privacy of their homes how long her husband would remain single. "I give him two years at furthest," said Mrs. Harrison Chippendale. "A man so rich as he is reputed to be, with two young children, is certain to marry; ought to marry, perhaps. But I only hope for the sake of Boston that he will wait a year."

Harder to bear even than the days prior to the obsequies had been those immediately following them when at every step Blaisdell encountered some new reminder of his wife. But it was characteristic of him to endeavor from the moment Lora was buried to throw off the incubus of sorrow which destiny had laid upon his spirit. Everything must go on just as before; everything must be done just as Lora

would have wished it. Her jewelled work-box, her portfolio and other personal possessions must not be touched or removed. A death mask had been taken; he would have a charming bust of her features, and her portrait should be painted by the greatest living artist, for nothing which he possessed did her full justice. He talked of her freely, and directed that the children should be encouraged to do the same. So far as was humanly possible he would be cheerful—confront the inevitable with fortitude. Lora would wish him to mourn her profoundly—there had been almost a touch of greediness in her desire to be loved; but she would be the first to recognize that what must be must be and to bid him to renew valiantly the struggle of life. It would be a struggle; existence had lost its zest. Yet it was his duty for the sake of the children not to let his grief sap his energies.

The children! How ambitious she would have been for them. Dorothy was nearly fourteen; the boy not quite twelve; just at the formative age. Their education would be an absorbing interest. There was the dancing class; Blaisdell recalled Lora's solicitude—her indignation at her failure to have Dorothy included. Here was one matter to be rectified promptly or there would be trouble—trouble down-town. And the dear little woman had never been invited to the Puritan balls, on which her heart was set. Yes, there were, indeed, scores to settle and the children's future to be made secure. The boy should go to Harvard and to Europe afterward; travel, learn languages, and have every advantage which great wealth could command; and he would see that there was no house in Boston so exclusive that Lora's daughter was not welcome. She should have the handsomest coming-out ball ever given in the city, and her marriage portion should match

that of any princess. Lora was in the grave, but in her children, flesh of her flesh, spirit of her spirit, she still survived.

As he thus lifted his stricken head to face the future, the first impression which Blaisdell received was that his sister-in-law understood his purpose and was silently—tenderly abetting it. She had stepped into the breach and been at his right hand from the hour when death had entered the house, looking after the children and taking charge of the minor arrangements, for Mrs. Avery was limp and dumb from grief. From the moment when she had come to him with outstretched hands and eyes which revealed the depths of the sorrow and sympathy which she forbore to put into words he knew that she yearned with all her heart to help and to spare him. He understood that she was there to do, and, if possible, anticipate his bidding; she asked no unnecessary questions, she shielded him from minor responsibilities; she moved noiselessly yet alertly about the house, giving needed instructions, and now that the funeral was over, maintaining the domestic routine, until such time as he should choose to assume control. She had disciplined her grief; her face wore an aspect of hardy brightness as if her thought were, "I cannot hope to console you, but life must be taken up again in the old grooves and I am here to aid you to be cheerful." Did she not divine his willingness to speak of Lora? Second his wish that nothing should be changed and everything go on as if his wife were still mistress of his house? She sat with him every evening in the large, lonely library, and they talked of the dead—of the sort of monument he should erect to her memory—a hospital?—a training school for girls?—of the marble bass-relief which he hoped to have executed by St. Gaudens and of the bust he intended

to order. Usually Mrs. Avery was in the room, but her habitual loquacity seemed stayed, as if her well-spring of life had been frozen at the source by the icy hand which had robbed her of her only child.

And yet it was his mother-in-law who presently had reminded Blaisdell that this interregnum could not last, and who forced the sternly practical on his attention. Something definite must be arranged about the children. Ought they not to have a governess—a superior person who would care for them when she and Priscilla were not at hand? She herself and Priscilla would see as much as possible of the poor little darlings, but at best they must necessarily be without a suitable supervising eye many hours of every day. And the right sort of woman should combine the qualities of house-keeper and be able to save Hugh the worry of looking after the servants and ordering dinner.

This suggestion was broached by Mrs. Avery one evening after she had been sitting for over an hour without speaking. Blaisdell had forgotten her presence in the large room which was lighted only by two shaded lamps; her voice issuing from a remote corner in shadow broke in upon his dialogue with Priscilla beside the embers of the wood fire.

"Something definite ought to be decided about the children."

Having thus broken the spell of silence, Mrs. Avery became tearfully verbose; but though her phrases issued jerkily, their purport as a whole was unmistakably definite.

When she paused Blaisdell did not answer for a moment. "A governess? A house-keeper? There must be some one to look after the children, of course; but the right individual or no one. It may take months to find her. I do not feel like considering the matter just yet."

"But when Priscilla goes the motherless dears ought to have some one besides the servants, even though you are obliged to change. As their grandmother, I think you should advertise immediately. It's a painful idea having any one—er—new in the house; but you yourself, Hugh, keep saying that everything must go on just as Lora would wish; and I'm sure the poor child would wish you to engage some superior rather elderly person right away, even if she isn't perfection. Otherwise the darlings will be terribly lonely. A man doesn't know, Hugh—a man doesn't know, no matter how clever he may be. I leave it to Priscilla."

Mrs. Avery had never taken so firm a stand against her son-in-law during the whole course of his married life, and her sudden change from a state of mental coma to one bordering on garrulous opposition prompted Blaisdell to turn toward the authority appealed to. He judged her importunity to be the result of disordered nerves. But if Priscilla agreed that the matter was urgent, he might be willing to consider it further.

"I am in no haste to go home again; I'm ready to remain with the children so long as Hugh desires—if he wishes me to stay. Sooner or later he will find the proper person."

Priscilla's offer was not made on the spur of the moment, but was the culmination of a thought which had possessed her ever since the first shock of Lora's death had spent itself—who was to look after those poor children? Who better than she? What more useful work could she turn her comparatively idle hands to than this labor of love? Was it not the most suitable of all employments for an old maid—or rather, to save her from the rigidities which beset old maids, especially in Boston? And it was fortunate

that she was no younger—for had she been a girl of twenty, the conventional might have demurred at her residence under the roof of her step-brother-in-law. As it was, this would be the most natural of arrangements. Her other interests were insignificant in comparison with the privilege of guarding and helping to guide these motherless children. Who else would fill the place if she did not? She could almost hear Lora's voice appealing to her from the grave.

Mrs. Avery gave a joyous gasp. "Of course, there's no hurry if you're willing. I had taken for granted you were anxious to get back to your studies, clubs and charities. But if you're ready, Priscilla dear, to stay until the proper person is found, why, that's the ideal arrangement, isn't it, Hugh?"

Despite all the evidences of his sister-in-law's sympathy, this possibility had never occurred to Blaisdell. Not that it was too much to ask; on the contrary, now that it was suggested, he wondered that they all had not hit on this at once as the obvious, natural thing. As he felt the glow of satisfaction which this sane solution of many difficulties brought with it, he asked himself eagerly why there should be any limit to her stay.

"The proper person? No one else can ever be the proper person in comparison with Priscilla. She is the natural protector of Lora's children—if she will consent to remain; the one our dear Lora would have chosen—for Mrs. Avery's place is beside her husband. Why should there be talk of any other person, if Priscilla is ready for their sake to make this house her home? I ask you, Priscilla, to remain indefinitely."

"Indefinitely? Permanently? I hadn't thought of that. It's better still; but isn't it asking too much of dear Priscilla?" Mrs. Avery, visibly startled by the sweeping char-

acter of the invitation, could not refrain from wavering comment. "It's for her to say, though."

Priscilla did not ponder her reply. She had long ago weighed the pros and cons. "As you intimate, Hugh, my place for the present seems to be here. My father has his wife—and your—Lora's children need some feminine substitute for a mother's tenderness when you are not at home, We won't talk now of dates—or details; but if you like, you may consider my stay permanent—until—er—I change my mind or you do. As to my avocations—they will not be altogether interrupted. Or, if they are, what will it really matter? Boston's crop of spinsters could be decimated without interrupting the progress of philanthropy or philosophy."

"It's settled, then. It's too good to be true." Such was the final fruit of Mrs. Avery's perturbation, and thereupon her feelings found further relief in tears.

Blaisdell rose from his seat and approaching his sister-in-law, put out both his hands—as she had done to him in the hour of his anguish. "It's generous of you—and natural, too. You have my everlasting gratitude. While you are in this house, consider your slightest wish to be the law."

"Thank you, Hugh. I trust we shall always agree as to what is best for Lora's children; but, if we don't—of course, your wish must be the law."

He looked her in the eyes as if he would fain challenge her insinuation. Had not her will until within the last six months always been dominated by his? "We have generally agreed in the past about everything," he said.

"Have we? I hope we have. I am not sure."

"There have been trifles—" She raised one of her hands, which he held, to check him. "Yes, trifles," she

interrupted. "We needn't discuss them. But no two people can expect to agree about everything. You may be sure, Hugh, that I will do my best for Lora's children."

Trifles. But were they trifles? Priscilla asked herself the question after she had gone to her room that evening, as, looking out from her window over the tree tops of the Commonwealth Avenue park at the bright heavens, she composed herself to reflect on the new turn in her affairs. It was a beautiful night. Rain in the forenoon had terminated in a dense fall of snow. This had ceased just before sunset and had been followed by a sharp fall in temperature which had frozen the laden boughs so that the white landscape glittered like an arctic fairy-land and every twig was a spear of ice, while overhead the full moon rode high, playing hide and seek among the remnants of the clouds which a vehement northwest wind was banishing. For, in the course of twelve consecutive hours in Boston it may thaw, rain, snow, blow and freeze again.

She had scarcely given a thought to her own past since the sudden tragedy of her sister's death had made everything else appear unimportant and she had hastened to her brother-in-law's side, seeking to share his burden of sorrow. Their minor differences had seemed to vanish as if they never had existed, and even in the harrowing days which followed she had been subconsciously thankful that they met once more on the old terms of concord. Yet now that the pressing question of her immediate future was settled, and she was free once more to think of the living rather than the dead, her mind reverted to the evening of the debate before the trustees of the library and to her own enthusiasm on that occasion. The Bacchante! Should the fountain be banished or remain? Although no decision had yet been rendered on the merits

of that burning question, somehow the controversy seemed to have dwindled into secondary importance and become dwarfed beside the greater issues of life, for one of which she, in common with all which believed itself to be Boston, had momentarily mistaken it. Had the agitated sensibilities of the rest simmered down?—she wondered; or was the dark shadow of her sorrow responsible for her own present indifference?

Yet how roused—how tense with excitement she had been! And how angry with Hugh when, rising to reply, he had wilfully misconstrued Henry Sumner's opposition. She had never in her life been so indignant with her brother-in-law—never felt so completely at odds with him. A trifle? Even now, as she dwelt on the scene, the blood gathered to her cheeks and her pulses quickened. Why had he said this? He knew that it was false; had appeared to introduce it solely to irritate Henry and confuse the issue. She had herself felt at the moment a fierce desire to spring to her feet and contradict him. How proud she had been that Henry had lost his temper! No one but a saint or a sage would have failed to do so—even though he played into his opponent's hands. Now, the entire incident seemed very far away; and yet an explanation was still lacking. Presently, when Hugh had in some manner recovered his spirits, she would call him to account for this, and ascertain what excuse he had to offer, if any.

What a strenuous meeting it had been from first to last! Henry's opening argument had been delivered with a lucid energy which had surprised her. She had never before heard him speak in public. His voice was a little harsh and nasal; he displayed not much variety or humor, but she realized that his strength was the conviction which he produced of believing every word he uttered—that his en-

thusiasm was not of the lips but of the soul. No wonder that the applause when he sat down was overwhelming; he had omitted nothing; he had stated their case with a thoroughness and force which, because of his righteously indignant faith, became magnetic. And Chauncey Chippendale had answered him. With lightness, gaiety, apposite sardonic sallies, and a final plea based on reason and liberality, as he had called it. "New York will welcome the Bacchante with open arms if we reject her, and Boston will become ridiculous in the eyes of the nation. Such artistic squeamishness is enough to make the sacred codfish at the State House laugh."

And this had not been the end. Priscilla, as she watched the flying clouds overhead, recalled the aftermath—the breaking up of the meeting; how, when it dissolved, many voices continued to agitate the question in little groups all over the hall. How Miss Georgiana Chippendale, in high dudgeon against her nephew for his part in the proceedings and remarking explosively for the benefit of those she met: "Sacred codfish! That boy hasn't the least conception of what we stand for. He makes fun of everything"—worked her way gradually to where he was standing in order to exclaim: "I'm ashamed of you, Chauncey. You are deficient in moral stamina."

Priscilla remembered, too, her own brief passage at arms with Miss Winston who had stopped to state with unwonted asperity: "I passed an hour yesterday in careful inspection of the Bacchante for the fifth time and I consider the position of those who condemn this joyous creature as meretricious to be absurd—simply absurd." On the spur of the moment her retort had been: "None are so blind as those who will not see," a ferocity at which she subsequently blushed. But, like every one else at the time,

her emotions were at fever heat. Miss Winston's nose had trembled so that her eye-glasses fell to the ground, and they had bumped their heads in a mutual endeavor to pick them up. Indeed, the only person who appeared to be reasonably cool was Morgan Drake. He had joined her in the corridor as they passed out, and whispered: "A social historian, if he had lived to be a hundred, would never have a better chance to see Boston worked up to a fury over nothing"; which, not being to her liking, she had instantly replied: "On the contrary, Mr. Drake, a moral principle is at stake; and anything is preferable to remaining on the fence." Decidedly—as she reviewed them now—her recorded remarks had been tart if not peppery. Thereupon Mr. Drake—and this was her reason for exonerating him from the prevailing state of tension—had ignored her crushing speech and said: "I know. Whichever way it's decided, there are a few people on either side who will carry a bitter remembrance of this prodigious controversy to their graves." Thereupon he had recited—she had looked them up afterward and found them to be Coleridge's—these lines to which, in spite of her impetuous mood, she had deigned to listen attentively:

> "They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
> Like cliffs which had been rent asunder.
> A gloomy sea now flows between.
> But neither heat nor frost nor thunder
> Shall wholly do away I ween
> The marks of that which once hath been."

How all these Bostonians of a certain class could quote! Was she one of those whom Morgan meant? Assuredly not; for she had cooled off; was almost ready to apologize to Miss Winston. Priscilla smiled, then sighed, and she

put her hands to her cheeks aware that they were glowing with the awakened memories of the prodigious controversy. She pulled down the shade and walked away from the window. What a tangle of inconsistencies life was proving to be! A genuine Boston girl! She was just like the rest of them it appeared. A modified specimen with modern redeeming points, but with the same unmistakable substratum. And an old maid into the bargain; a well-preserved, but well-defined old maid.

Priscilla smiled again and glanced around her at the handsomely furnished spacious chamber—"the best spare room," as Lora used to call it—bright with gay chintz and the latest elegancies which make for comfort and cheeriness; a little too elaborate, perhaps, like the rest of the house; but a few touches would render it homelike. How much better off she was than most old maids with these dear children to watch over. She had health, an abundance of money, and, better still, friends. Men friends, too. What woman of her age could boast of two more devoted, interesting friends than her brother-in-law and Henry Sumner? Decidedly she was to be envied. How unlike they were, yet how individual! What a pity that they were not congenial! She promised herself that when this unfortunate episode of the Bacchante was finally settled, she would make another determined effort to overcome their prejudice against each other. For necessarily, now that her home was with Hugh, Henry would be constantly encountering him when he came to call. The friendship of both of them was very precious to her; and, assuming that Henry had made up his mind to take no for an answer and let well enough alone, she was willing to admit that she was not perfectly sure which of the two, on the whole, she liked best. "There I go," she said to her-

self, "analyzing my emotions just as I have always vowed that I never would do."

Upon this Priscilla hastened to get into bed and put out the light by way of dismissing the intruder. As she composed herself to sleep she was conscious of feeling what she termed—settled. Poor Hugh needed all the companionship and consolation she could spare him, and as for the other —if he would only continue sensible, they might have many delightful interests in common.

Two days subsequent to this Priscilla was summoned from her luncheon with the children by a telephone call.

"Is this Miss Avery?" She recognized Henry's voice at the other end of the wire. "I've some news for you. The trustees have decided in our favor. The Bacchante is to be removed; the donor has been requested to withdraw his gift. Isn't it glorious?"

The transport in his tone was contagious; she felt the thrill of victory. After all, she was less indifferent than she had supposed.

"I congratulate you."

"It was more than half your doing, for you made converts by the score and formed public opinion when it was wavering."

"Nonsense. It was your resolute speech which convinced the trustees that we were in the right. What will the other side say?"

"I've just come from the Sphinx Club where Oliver Spinney accosted me with, 'I hope you're gratified, Henry Sumner, at having organized the damnable conspiracy which is going to retard Boston's artistic growth for twenty-five years.'"

"How absurd!" Was Morgan Drake's prophecy about to become true, she wondered. "I can't escape respon-

sibility as a co-conspirator—and we've won. I do hope, however, that Boston as a whole will simmer down—until the next great agitation."

He paused for an instant, then resumed: "I suspect from your tone that you think we were a little—er—hysterical, now that you have had time to simmer down. The precise issue was a small one, but we have a right to remember that a vital principle was at stake."

"We comforted ourselves with that all through the campaign," she answered with a laugh. "I cling to it still, fellow-conspirator."

"I'm sure you do. And what I would really like to say is that but for the inspiration I received from you——"

"Good-by." Priscilla cut him off abruptly and hung up the receiver. To her practised ear his voice sounded decidedly ominous. It would be too bad, she reflected, if, now that she felt comfortably settled, he should take it into his head to become troublesome again.

CHAPTER XXI

"ALLOW me to congratulate you on the good looks of your stenographer," said Chauncey Chippendale to his Cousin Henry. "She's a peach."

"You mean Miss Brackett?"

"I haven't the remotest idea what her name is, my dear fellow, but you know perfectly well the one I mean. The other is homely as a rail fence. Such coyness on your part merits investigation." Thereupon, observing the semblance of embarrassment which his words produced, Chauncey bent a rallying glance on his cousin.

Henry had recently moved into more spacious offices.

His practice was growing. Certain notable victories in the line of what might be called legal forlorn hopes had drawn attention to him. He had attacked with success a railroad lease deemed to be invulnerable, and won a suit involving an easement of light and air, the decision in which had required the demolition of the upper stories of a towering office building. As counsel for certain minority stockholders, he was engaged at present in endeavoring to invalidate the sale of a certain electric light company, and it was in regard to this last matter that Chauncey had dropped in—the first time he had done him the honor of a visit since Henry had been called to the bar.

"She's a nice girl," said Henry. "She's been with me now over a year. Since I moved in here she has done work occasionally for Uncle Baxter, whom I succeeded in convincing one day that shorthand and the type-writer are not absolutely fatal to accuracy."

Their Uncle Baxter Chippendale occupied a room at the opposite end of the same corridor in which Henry's offices were located. He had literally been driven out like a rat by the pulling down of the old-fashioned structure where he had pored over his ledger and cut off coupons for half a century. "If I had known what they were up to, I would have bought the building and prevented it during my lifetime," had been the old gentleman's frequent declaration while the process of destruction was going on, but he grumblingly admitted that his new quarters, which were approximately in the same spot, were nearly as comfortable as the old.

The reference to his uncle caused Chauncey to forget his interest in Miss Brackett. "I suppose you've made his will by this time. Taking offices in the same entry savors of undue influence."

Henry shook his head. "He got me to draw a deed once when his regular lawyer—whose name I don't know —was out of town, for which I charged him two dollars. That's the limit to my knowledge of his private affairs."

"You always were over-conscientious, Henry. Uncle Baxter must be a very rich man; he's one of the kind who hives and never spends. Gilt-edged things every time; or, if by chance he gets a bad egg, he sits on it until it hatches, as it always does in the end. Take Warrior Mills, which the rest of the family sold against his advice; it sells to-day at one hundred per cent. higher than when my father tipped his out. I've heard he bought reams of Western railroad stocks when they were on their uppers in the dismal days of the seventies, and tucked them away into his safe. Aunt Georgiana has done well with telephone and Electric Coke, but for steady Dec. 31st trial balance big profits, year in year out, she isn't in the same class with Uncle Baxter. Some of her favorites have turned out the veriest wildcats. Well, treat the rest of the family fairly if he consults you as to the disposition of his money."

Chauncey was now virtually the head of Langdon & Company. The retirement of General Horatio Langdon from the firm of which for a generation he had been the controlling spirit was the most important change on State Street which the first of January following the agitation over the Bacchante disclosed. Of the five men whose names were appended to the new articles of partnership published in the newspapers of that day two were the seniors of his son-in-law both in age and experience; but every one in touch with affairs down-town had surmised that this genial but ambitious young man would, like the Turk, brook no rival near the throne. These elders were good office men—so Chauncey had intimated privately

those who shared his confidence, which was taken to signify that he and the two juniors—both pupils of his own, and one of them like himself, a former foot-ball player—would direct the policy of the new firm, which was to be enterprising. Not that Langdon & Company had ever been lacking in enterprise. On the contrary, Chauncey had always heard that the General as a young man had been noted for his capacity to lead and for his foresight. The old war horse had built up the business—at first, strictly an old-fashioned commission business; but he had kept up with the times and had learned the art of underwriting bond flotations at—say—92 and disposing of them to his customers at from 99 to 101—a very neat, clean transaction. In case the bonds hung fire the banks would carry them; but during his administration they rarely if ever, did hang fire, but had gone like hot cakes—been over-subscribed for.

But an elderly man is not like a young one. He falls into ruts without realizing it; his perceptions grow near-sighted so that he distrusts everything which is not close to his nose—so Chauncey generalized. Chauncey, moreover, plumed himself on having helped to keep his father-in-law out of the ruts, as a consequence of which the firm had not merely held its own on the Street, but prospered; nevertheless, he felt that certain opportunities had been neglected, only to be availed of by their competitors, for the sole reason that General Langdon was less quick than formerly to perceive the drift of commercial transactions, and more prone to be appalled by their magnitude. Chauncey's programme was to enlarge the underwriting branch of the business. As the country grew, the number of new enterprises increased, and the directors of old ones were compelled sooner or later to enlarge their facilities—all of which meant bor-

rowing money. He would welcome—pursue a liberal attitude toward the numerous railroad, industrial and electric light and water power companies in the market for funds; scrutinize their securities carefully, but refuse to be deterred from negotiating them merely because the enterprises were new or in the far west or the south. Langdon & Company would continue to be conservative and at the same time let their customers in now and then for a good thing—something really worth while. In the case of most of these remote public service corporations the right of subscribing for the underlying bonds brought with it a bonus of common stock; and these shares thus given away often proved so valuable as to wipe out the original cost of the investment and leave the firm and its customers handsomely on velvet.

A year had passed since Chauncey had found himself in a position where he could thus enlarge the firm's outlook without encountering frequent reluctance—which at times became a positive refusal—on the part of his father-in-law to participate in this or that syndicate If figures and an enlarged circle of customers were a test, the broader policy of the new leader had been vindicated. Chauncey was certainly himself on the surface the embodiment of prosperity. Time in conjunction with good living had enlarged slightly both his cheeks and his waistband; but the tendency to corpulence was not unbecoming; it emphasized his amiability and deepened the humorous lines around his mouth without detracting from the nicety of his personal appearance. He was debonair as ever, and, though he lived up to the latest fashion, was still a walking rebuke both to slovenliness and ostentation. It seemed the obvious thing to Henry to retort:

"I don't see what use you can have for any more money, Chauncey."

Chauncey's brow contracted slightly. "Don't worry about that, dear boy," he said. "I could find use for an extra million any minute."

"But you must have done exceedingly well. Take Electric Coke alone. Report credits you with owning a lot of it." There was no envy in Henry's tone. He appeared interested solely in demonstrating that his cousin was indisputably prosperous.

"It sold at $1,000 a share this morning." Chauncey did not conceal his satisfaction, yet he sighed and added: "The stock will sell at double the figure some day, if I obtain the control. At the same time, every share locks up a lot of money—and you fellows who aren't married haven't the smallest conception of how much it costs nowadays to live."

"Very likely not. But I should be able to worry along, it seems to me, on about a fifth of your income—as I suppose it to be—and fancy myself abnormally rich from my point of view."

"Your point of view doesn't include—all sorts of things." Chauncey did not think it worth while to enter into details, so obvious were the number and variety of them. "And it doesn't include also having a finger in every financial pie—being down for a hundred thousand slice of this, a fifty thousand slice of that, a hundred thousand slice of the other—which, of course, argues excellent credit. But a good-sized inheritance of ready cash would establish me on easy street, and I don't mind saying this is the only really enviable residence for a citizen of my multifarious tastes and generally ubiquitous desire to keep up with everything that's going. Which reminds me of what I wished to ask you: When everything is running smoothly and everybody appears to be happy, why disturb the universal harmony by inserting a cog in the wheel of progress? You always

were a devil of a fellow for that, Henry. Why not occasionally instead put a penny in the slot and help things along? Those fellows in Saxonville Electric would have quieted down if you hadn't egged them on."

"They came to me for advice."

"And you picked a technical flaw in the sale."

"They said the property was being sacrificed—sold for much less than its value, and that the directors of the two boards were identical."

"Why not prove the value, then, instead of harking back to Noah's Ark and raking up an infernal defect in the articles of incorporation, which both sides supposed to be perfectly sound? As a consequence, the stock has fallen fifty per cent. in the last fortnight, and of course, the banks have to be protected. Yet you have the hardihood to inquire what I could do with any more money. I bought a hundred thousand for a quick turn and now, I suppose, I'm liable to stay with it for the next ten years. What I really wish to know is whether you've a good case or are simply bluffing. I won't give it away. It would be a cousinly act to let me know."

Henry's impulse to resent this cool inquiry was mollified by the appeal to kinship. He could detect behind Chauncey's nonchalance symptoms of solicitude. "I'm not bluffing; that's not my style. The legal point is a genuine one, but is doubtful; no one can feel sure until we get a decision; and my clients declare that they will go to the Supreme Court of the United States if necessary to test it."

"Which means a lifetime—financially speaking. There's one more nail in the coffin of capitalistic enterprise. I'm beginning to agree with my father that this country is going to the devil. A man no sooner gets a fairly good thing but some one else conspires to get it away from him." Chaun-

cey drew himself up. Different as his figure was from that of his father—for he resembled the Floyds—he reminded Henry of Mr. Harrison Chippendale by his air of wounded and despondent dignity. "Those fellows were simply disgruntled. Full value is being paid for the property to my personal knowledge, and the effort to obtain more by delay is—nothing but a species of blackmail. On their part of course, not yours," he hastened to add, for he noticed a rising gleam of resentment in Henry's eyes. "It's your bread and butter; I recognize that. But isn't one of the logical consequences of being a constitutional obstructionist that one is continually helping to pull down instead of build up?"

Henry had long ago schooled himself not to allow Chauncey's invariably patronizing attitude to annoy him. Despite the concluding saw, it was plain that his cousin had taken pains to exonerate him from complicity in the more serious charge. "You see," he replied with a twinkle, "my clients are just as positive on their side that they have been—er—imposed on. They used a stronger word just as you did. So, if their position is sound, it behooves me, doesn't it, to do my best to pull down, as you call it, in this particular instance? And carrying that argument to its logical conclusion is not helping to pull down in a righteous cause really helping to build up?"

Chauncey stared a moment with growing amusement, then rose. "I give it up, my dear fellow. You're the same old sixpence, aren't you?" He glanced around him to take in the details of the unostentatious but comfortable quarters; at the high shelves lined with law reports and the walls relieved here and there by an etching of some old legal luminary—a lord chancellor or some national master of jurisprudence. "You seem pretty well fixed here," he continued in the tone of one rather surprised to

behold surroundings so little open to stricture. He had expected to find them cramped, or at least fusty, despite Henry's recent iconoclastic successes. "You ought to be getting married."

"After hearing from you how much it costs to live?"

Chauncey nodded in appreciation of the pertinency of the retort. "I'll confide to you," he said, "that a man in my position doesn't need a lot of the things he has. It's getting used to having things which counts; if you once have them, you can't get rid of them, and other people will expect you to have them. I belong to—sixteen clubs, for instance; I was counting up the other day. Half of them I never enter. How often do I use my steam yacht? About a dozen times in the season. What use have I for two-thirds of the horses in my stable? There you are. And in return for that confidence," he continued, pausing to light a cigarette which afforded him a moment to choose his words, "I would like to know—if you are at liberty to say—who is behind your crowd in Saxonville Electric?"

"Behind them?"

"Footing the bills. There's a rumor on the Street that Hugh McD. Blaisdell is putting up the requisite dough."

The suggestion seemed so absurdly incongruous from Henry's standpoint that he answered placidly: "He hasn't paid me anything, if you mean that. My retainer was sent me by the client who consulted me. Besides, I'm about the last person in the world whom Mr. Blaisdell would select as a legal adviser."

"Oh, yes, I remember, you were at loggerheads over the Bacchante. But that idiotic row quieted down long ago. Indeed, he would employ you quick as a shot if he thought you knew the combination which would open the safe."

"One would think he were a burglar from your metaphor, Chauncey." Since his cousin appeared unaware of the chasm of distrust which yawned between him and Blaisdell, why refer to it?

Chauncey rocked himself on his toes contemplatively. "He is a burglar in the sense that he'd be extremely glad to see the contents of my tin box transferred to his. We're very chummy when we meet—we're interested in lots of the same things; but all the same, I've a sneaking feeling that Blaisdell would be tickled to death if he heard I was down and out; burst wide open financially. That's the way he's constituted. It's dog eat dog in the lexicon which he has studied ever since he began raking in the stuff, and he intends, if he can, to remain the biggest dog. Natural, if you think of it. I'm not complaining. Perhaps he will, perhaps he won't. I only wished to inquire if you know whether he is nosing along this particular trail. It seems you don't, Henry, so good day."

After this monologue, much of which in Henry's ears savored of enigma to which he did not possess the key, Chauncey restored his straw hat to his head and turned on his heel; but as his hand reached the door knob he looked around to add quizzically: "To most fellows I would say 'be good'; but to you, Henry, it's safe to say, 'be bad!'"

As, pleased with this witticism, Chauncey walked breezily through the outer office his glance lingered again appreciatively on Miss Brackett who was busy type-writing—a fair young woman of about twenty-five in a cool costume of summer with becoming ribbons. He realized that she was even more comely than he had supposed. What a pity, he reflected, that she should be wasted on Henry; shut up in a law office when she might adorn his own, for she was pretty enough to help to keep customers stable.

She seemed modest, too; she ignored his presence as he passed. Recalling Henry's tell-tale embarrassment at his reference to her attractions, he wondered with amusement what it might signify. Henry was no gay Lothario, judging from his blameless past. Would it not be just like him, if he were interested in the girl, to throw practical considerations to the winds and make her an offer of marriage? His affair with Miss Avery had hung fire so long that he must have given up hope even if he still hankered after the heiress. How would the family feel if it should wake up some morning and read in the newspapers in large head-lines, "Married to his own stenographer! A scion of Boston's bluest blood makes a romantic match!" What would Uncle Baxter and Aunt Georgiana say? At least, Henry would bear watching; there was no telling what these visionary, æscetic fellows would do when it came to a pinch; and all the opposition in the world would do no good if he once made up his mind. Thus absolving himself from responsibility and inwardly entertained by the picturesque if dire possibility—which, in a sense, would be a logical outcome of his cousin's numerous vagaries—Chauncey returned to his own haunts, stopping first at his bank to make good the deficiencies in his collateral caused by the shrinkage in Saxonville Electric.

Although Henry's confusion had been genuine, Chauncey's interpretation of it was wide of the mark. Far from entertaining a romantic interest for Miss Brackett—the reverse was true; she was or had been enamoured of him. The growing consciousness of this had been troubling Henry for the last six months. Modest soul that he was, he had shrunk from the truth until to be blind to it longer was impossible. That a pretty young woman should fall

in love with him out of a clear sky without the slightest provocation on his part struck him as so extraordinary that he shut his eyes to and refused to credit the accumulating manifestations of it. No girl would be so unmaidenly, and he would not be vain goat enough to believe it; there must be some mistake—some gross exaggeration on the part of his own faculties.

What made the matter more embarrassing was that she had been recommended to him in the first instance by Priscilla; she had been one of a family in whom the latter had become interested as a social worker. Mabel Brackett had been trained at Priscilla's expense to become an accomplished stenographer, and at the time when she was fitted to earn her own living he had, at Priscilla's request, given her employment in his office. Naturally, he had been kind to her. The result had been that she had made an idol of him and presently had begun to show it. Her eagerness to do his bidding was accompanied by glances of thinly-veiled admiration which could not be interpreted as mere coquetry. Flowers appeared at intervals upon his desk traceable to no other source; he strongly suspected her of having sent him a sentimental valentine. He tried coldness by way of tacit reproof, and her large blue eyes had filled with tears; she had construed it as dissatisfaction with her work, and the tone in which she declared, "I would do anything in the world to please you, Mr. Sumner," plainly suggested that she wished him to understand that if he sent her away she would die. To dismiss her—find a place for her somewhere else was the obvious solution; but what explanation could he offer to Priscilla? She would be disappointed at the failure of her protégée; yet to endeavor to reveal the astounding truth could not fail to expose him to ridicule. Could she be

blamed if she secretly believed that he had mistaken coquetry or zeal for sentiment? Difficult as it had been to convince himself—his shame-faced self—that Miss Brackett's conduct could be accounted for on any other theory, he foresaw that Priscilla would laugh in her sleeve at him to the end.

Relief—it was literally this—had recently come from an unexpected quarter. Miss Brackett had suddenly begun to cool off; and of her own accord. A change in her manner became distinctly noticeable. It was distant, and suggested a person whose pride has been wounded. Henry realized that she gazed at him, when she looked at him at all, coldly instead of admiringly, as if to let him know she understood that her devotion had been spurned. He felt profoundly relieved; at the same time he experienced unpleasant emotions, for it seemed to him that he must have bungled the affair—shown himself unduly severe—to produce such a radical change. Would not his Cousin Chauncey in his place have managed to keep the girl at arm's length and yet avoid lacerating her feelings?

Her resentment—if it were such—had proceeded no further, however. She had not left his employ, and after a few weeks her half-mournful, half-frigid expression had changed to a slightly haughty if studied indifference when in his presence. But Henry gathered from what he observed of her demeanor in the outer office that she was recovering her spirits. She showed signs of an increasing interest in dress. Her appearance, though always neat, had lacked those touches which girls who take an interest in personal adornment know how to impart to their daily toilette. She began to wear gayer ribbons, more stylish bows and minor trinkets; her gowns emphasized the prevailing fashion; she indulged in more starch and some

perfume. She had evidently become much more sophisticated. Could it mean that she was going to the bad? Guiltless though he felt himself to be, Henry recognized a responsibility to observe the girl more closely. He failed to detect, however, anything to suggest either evil company or desperation.

It was useless now to ask himself whether if he had "jollied" her a little instead, she might not have been satisfied and have continued to worship at a respectful distance until she recovered from her infatuation. He had succeeded in affronting her, and her chagrin must work itself out. Apparently, its secondary effects had led her to have recourse to embellishment, and it could not be denied that these endeavors were becoming, provided they went no further; her blonde type of beauty had been set off by the more deliberate attention which she paid to her attire. Further observation had convinced Henry a little later that she was also more assiduous in her work, as if greater proficiency were a part of her programme, and he breathed more freely. If her ambition had been aroused, might not the unfortunate episode even prove an advantage after her disappointment had died out? In his eagerness to atone for the distress of which he had been the unwitting cause, Henry raised her salary, and shortly after moving into his new offices he had offered her the chance of earning extra compensation by doing occasional clerical work for his Uncle Baxter. Miss Brackett thanked him. Her manner was still distant, indicating that she desired to maintain the most strictly formal relations with her employer; but whatever her repugnance, she showed no signs of wishing to leave his service. Such was the condition of affairs at the time of Chauncey's visit, which accounts for his momentary confusion when compliment-

ed by this fastidious judge on the attractions of his stenographer.

On this same day, after leaving the bank—the Massasoit National—where his block of Saxonville Electric bonds and stock were pledged, Chauncey had proceeded but a few hundred yards before he came face to face with Blaisdell. Stopping to exchange greetings, each congratulated the other simultaneously on the price at which Electric Coke had sold that morning.

"On its merits, too," added Blaisdell with suavity. "Every shareholder must feel satisfied, and yet no one can deny that we have managed a good thing conservatively."

"Conservatively? I should say we had. We—" Chauncey paused abruptly, fearing that his enthusiasm might defeat his purpose. He was sufficiently extended, already; the time was not so convenient as he could wish; but if Blaisdell were ready to sell, he could not afford to let the opportunity slip. "After all, we are dependent on patents—and where patents are concerned, I suppose no one can feel absolutely safe."

"One thousand dollars per share is a good round price for the stock. You've always been a bull on it and must have done exceedingly well. About three hundred shares came out this morning; from what source I do not know. I'm not in the market at that figure; for the moment, it's high—high enough. On the other hand, if there is any large interest desirous of realizing, I wouldn't mind adding to my holdings for a long pull."

This was dispassionate. Blaisdell was willing to show his hand to the extent of intimating that here was a chance to reap a handsome profit and retire from the field, if his would-be rival were so disposed. If done promptly and

with good grace, it might be the first step toward a peaceable settlement of other scores. His tone was the confidential one of a man ready to do another a good turn; if the other were sane enough to take advantage of the offer.

"For a long pull? That has always been my argument. Curiously enough, I was just on the point of asking you the same question—whether you feel like selling out. That is, I assume that mine was the large interest you had in mind." There was a touch of his father's formality in Chauncey's bland assertion.

"It had occurred to me that you—and the various branches of your family who hold stock—might think it was high enough and feel disposed to realize."

"But it's almost a family stock, Blaisdell. Uncle Baxter—I put him in one day five years ago almost by main force—never sells anything; and if Aunt Georgiana were to close out on my advice and the stock went up, where would I be? She hasn't forgotten the leading part I took on behalf of the Bacchante. Where did you get your hat, Blaisdell? It's a dandy."

The straw hat in question was a Panama of finest texture —at that time rarely visible on the streets of Boston. Beneath its ample curling brim Blaisdell's eyes were in shadow, and his round face looked exasperatingly cool.

"It ought to be; it cost $500. I have those fads occasionally." He took the Panama off and twirled it round on his index finger for Chauncey's inspection. "Think it over, Chippendale, think it over. No hurry; the same offer is open for six months. By Jove, it *is* hot," he exclaimed, replacing the hat on his head which was becoming bald at the crown. "Step in out of the sun or you'll bake, for there's another matter I wish to speak to you

about." They were on Congress Street. Hooking his arm through Chauncey's he led him into a door-way. "I've been poaching on another of your preserves, for I take it Massasoit National might be called one of your family stocks. Electric Coke started in my family, but I dare say my desire to control it is—er—an expensive fad. In the case of Massasoit, my dear Chauncey, I feel that I am performing a public service in proving to the present owners that it is worth more than it has been selling for, and at the same time saving an old Boston property from rusting out."

Chauncey was listening for a clue to what his companion was driving at. Irony was not Blaisdell's usual method, but this sounded very much like polite, withering satire, though the speaker seemed in the best of humor. "What is rusting out? If you refer to Massasoit National, it is solid as a rock."

"Relatively speaking; but it's a small bank—and there are too many small banks in Boston. What I wished to say is that, for the shares owned by you and your relatives, I am prepared to give one hundred and thirty-two, which, as you are aware, is fifteen dollars more than the market price."

So firmly and glibly were these words spoken that they presaged to Chauncey's ears a mastery of this particular situation, whatever it might prove to be. The Massasoit was a family property in the most desirable sense—Chauncey could borrow money there whenever he wished; although an old-fashioned institution, his collateral was never questioned. About one-quarter of the small capital stock was owned by kinsfolk or people with whom he was closely affiliated. He was a director and hand-in-glove with the management who were glad to have the firm's

account in return for reasonable favors which were not abused.

Chauncey freed his arm and faced him.

"Our stock isn't for sale, thank you. "

"Not when I tell you that I and certain other financial interests already own a controlling interest?"

Chauncey thrust his hands in his pockets and smiling grimly sought to appear unruffled. It was certainly a very hot day. The narrow rim of his flat straw hat seemed a feeble visor against the sun, and despite his London suit of thinnest India flannel, he was perspiring uncomfortably. He realized out of the corner of his eye that the flower in his button-hole was already wilted. "What's up? Have you been organizing a still hunt?"

"Only what I've just told you, man. We've bought up a controlling interest in order to merge the Massasoit National with the Marine National. Every business man knows that there are too many small banks in Boston—and yours happened to come in our way. We had to organize a still hunt, for if we had gone to you in the first place and you had declined to sell, the price would have soared. It wouldn't have been business. You're getting fifteen dollars more than the stuff is worth at present—which you can put into Electric Coke for a long pull; and, as for accommodation, we'll try to make it worth while for you and your firm to stay with us."

"I've just come from the bank and they didn't know anything about it there."

This was in the nature of an ebullition of surprise, not a challenge of the facts which Chauncey painfully realized must be exactly as the older man had stated.

"I was on my way to the bank with the papers when I met you," replied Blaisdell, indicating the small leather

hand-bag which he carried. "After ordering the transfers made I was going to call at your office to offer you the same terms as those the majority interests accepted. We are willing to buy the whole capital stock; and it will facilitate the process of liquidation if I may send cheques as soon as possible to the people you represent in order to clean the matter up."

Chauncey mused for a moment. "He has us pinched," he said to himself. "We left the gate ajar and he slipped in." There was really no excuse for virtuous resentment; control was control and included the right to wind up the bank or merge it in the larger concern. He himself could have had it at any time during the last ten years without very much outlay, and, as Blaisdell had stated, to have approached him first would have put him on his guard.

"As a matter of sentiment I hate to see the old landmarks swept away," he replied. "My grandfather kept his account at the Massasoit." This was as much as to say that to surrender was the only course open to him.

"All old landmarks have to go in time except those deliberately preserved for historic purposes. And some of them have no cash value. I realize your attachment to the venerable institution; but cold cash is a salve; it always comes in handy."

Chauncey could not deny that the truth of the last remark was exemplified by his own necessities. Apart from the annoyance of having been dispossessed summarily, the cash would come in handy. He almost fancied that he detected a twinkle in the depths of Blaisdell's sharp eyes as if the cheery consolation proffered masked a well-cherished suspicion that it would.

"I'll think the matter over for a day or two and write you," he answered.

"And think the other matter over, too. It's just a fad of mine, as I told you, that I wish the field to myself."

Chauncey's features broke into a knowing smile. "Oh, yes, I'll think it over," he retorted in a tone intended to convey an ultimatum.

Chauncey, whose summer home was at Pride's Crossing on the North Shore—six picturesque acres of woodland and lawn, fronting the sea, about forty minutes from Boston by the fast trains—had promised his wife that morning to bring from their town house a trinket which she had overlooked. As later in the day he drove down Beacon Street and through the deserted Back Bay with its rows of closed houses, tenantless save for caretakers who protected them against rust and moths and washed the family linen transplanted weekly to and fro in straw hampers, he aired his thoughts in the one-horse cab, for he was safe from being pried upon. Why not take Blaisdell at his word and realize on Electric Coke? He had made a magnificent profit; and the ready money would wipe out his obligations and leave him free to engage in new enterprises. Would not the huge cost of modern living, to which he had referred feelingly to Henry that morning, justify a prudent man in readjusting his affairs by means of such a handsome deal? He was one of the rich men of Boston, his credit was of the best, and his father-in-law was behind him. But he was borrowing a quantity of money and most of his financial canvas was spread. Nearly everything he owned looked well—was almost sure to be profitable in the end if the times continued good; for the moment, however, to increase his sail area further would expose him to the risks of kiting. To sell out would be in a measure a relief —but it would be a grievous blow to his pride.

For would not State Street argue, if he disposed of his

holdings and shortened sail, that he was content with second place? Would it not be tantamount to an admission that he had been crowded out of the race, and that this smooth-spoken, prosperous newcomer was to be the ruling force in local financial affairs henceforth? There was where the shoe pinched. He aspired—and his wife aspired for him—to leadership both down-town and up; to an ascendency which should safeguard and enhance the glamour associated with the name of Chippendale, so that it might stand even more significantly than in the past for irreproachable social distinction. He had set his heart on securing the control of Electric Coke; and why? Was it not chiefly that by so doing he might checkmate the too exuberant ambitions of Blaisdell? Prevent this would-be autocrat from dictating to him and to everybody what should and should not happen on State Street? It was the Boston of the past for which he stood—the Boston of fine social and commercial traditions, of conservatively progressive instincts and discriminating point of view, as opposed to the Boston of yesterday and from nowhere in particular, with its ostentatious lack of distinction and its social obtuseness. It might be desirable for him presently to take in sail in order to avoid any possible danger from running too close to the wind; he would do so at the first favorable opportunity. But not to give way at this important juncture appeared to him, now that he had a chance to weigh the matter, as an obligation which he owed both to himself and to society. His personal pride was involved, for to give up the control of Electric Coke would be virtually equivalent to an admission that he had been forced to let go.

Chauncey had reached this spirited conclusion before alighting from the cab. He paused a moment to scan the

outside of his carefully closed residence, and having noted that everything was as it should be, he glanced up and down the deserted avenue, reflecting that, save for the loneliness, Boston was not such an undesirable abode in summer. How comparatively cool and how very quiet it was. A faint easterly air was stirring. He observed here and there an occasional person sitting on the benches of the park which divides the driveway, enjoying the grateful shade of the trees which were planted when he was a boy. How they had spread, and how, during the same period, Boston had grown. At the time they were planted, and at the later date when his father's house was built, he could have told the name of every one who lived there. Nearly twenty years had passed, and in the interim the family fortunes had waned and had been reëstablished after vicissitudes. His father's place on the North Shore—originally bought for a song—was now a fortune in itself. It had pulled them through while he was serving his apprenticeship down-town, before his business success and marriage had made his own position enviable. The principal shadow resting on the family escutcheon at present was that his sisters had not married—not even Georgiana, whose piquancy and beauty were undeniable. He had almost come to the conclusion that it was not well for a girl to be too fastidious. As for Arthur, his younger brother, who was physically the image of their father, there was room, too, for a little concern on his account on the score of waywardness. He had offered him, on leaving college, employment in his office, but Arthur had shown himself more interested in leading cotillons and collecting first editions than in work. A slight coolness between them had been caused by his inquiry how his brother could afford to be the owner of a complete first edition of

Thackeray and to possess nearly all of Dickens; and a few months later Arthur had thrown up his position with Langdon & Company, declaring that business was uncongenial.

This had occurred four years before. Ever since then until recently Arthur had been ostensibly idle, of which condition of affairs Chauncey had found his father unduly tolerant. When he had inquired what was to become of Arthur if he failed to follow some money-making occupation, Mr. Chippendale hinted fondly at diplomatic life or literature. But whether from goading, lack of pocket money or change of heart, his brother had, within the last six months, obtained employment with the firm of Stoddard, Kent & Company, a young firm of stock-brokers, the moving spirit of which, Jack Stoddard, formerly an underling of Delano's, Blaisdell's partner, and brought up in that office, had recently started in business on his own account. Jack Stoddard had the reputation of being quick-witted, but he was loquacious and apt to be noisy. Rumor reported that he was trying to make friends among fashionable people, and an ugly rumor had already reached Chauncey that Arthur's post was the result of a tacit compact to obtain invitations to balls and dinner-parties for his employer, for value received down-town. For a Chippendale there could be only one graver breach—rank commercial dishonesty; but to probe the insinuation would be a difficult, not to say ticklish, undertaking. Arthur had always shown a tendency to pick up unorthodox acquaintances; this intimacy was only another instance and harmless on the surface. Nevertheless, the suspicion rankled in Chauncey's breast. He forebore to believe that a Chippendale could fall so low. He felt convinced in his heart that the report was baseless. But was not the incongruity

of Arthur's likings for strange company directly responsible for its origin?

A few days subsequent to this decision not to sell his holdings of Electric Coke to Blaisdell, his wife handed Chauncey a note on his return from Boston. It was from Priscilla inquiring if there were room for Lora's daughter Dorothy in the dancing class.

"I thought that was settled long ago—that there wasn't room," said Chauncey, who happened to remember that the matter had been broached in the dim past.

"That was the younger class, the Wednesday evening; this is the Friday. There probably wasn't room. There never need be if the applicants, especially the girls, are objectionable," answered Beatrice Chippendale. "I suppose that the women who were managing the class at that time decided that they didn't fancy the mother. But Miss Avery is a very different person; the girl, who is very pretty I believe, is likely to be well looked after. Why," she added, realizing that she was going out of her way to frame explanations, "I showed it to you because I thought you would be pleased to hear that I was doing something for Mr. Blaisdell, and to prevent you from complaining how snobbish we wives always are."

"Blaisdell is getting on fast enough without our assistance," replied Chauncey oracularly. "I'm very glad, dear, that there's room."

"But there isn't unless I decide that there is. How mysterious you are, Chauncey! Have you and Mr. Blaisdell had a falling out down-town?" Beatrice asked with loyal solicitude. "I have merely to write——"

"I wouldn't offend Miss Avery for anything. She's a fine woman—and a thoroughbred." Chauncey suddenly stopped rocking in the piazza chair in which he had seated

himself to enjoy the refreshing sea breeze after a wilting day in the city and slapped his knee. "It would be a master stroke for Blaisdell if he could induce her to marry him."

Beatrice waved aside this interjection on which at any other time she would have been glad to speculate. "But what has he been doing to you, Chauncey?"

"The last time we met he was smooth as silk."

Beatrice stamped her pretty foot imperatively. "Tell me what he has been doing."

"Three days ago we met on the street and each tried politely the anaconda act on the other. Neither succeeded, but I'm bound to admit to the wife of my bosom that he came nearer to swallowing me than I did to swallowing him."

This was enigmatical. Beatrice gave a slight shudder. Chauncey always told her of his troubles in the end, but his method was sometimes sardonically roundabout. Since he persisted for the moment in ambiguities she decided to curb her impatience and to change the subject in her turn. "Your mother was here this morning," she said, "and informed me that your cousin Lily Sumner is going to practise Christian Science—take an office and earn her living by healing people, as she calls it."

Chauncey sighed. Despite his habitual optimism and his prosperity, life—especially family affairs—seemed to be a little frayed at the edges. "I'm not surprised," he said with obvious calm after a pause. "It appears to me not unlikely that one of that versatile branch will bring up sooner or later at McLean Asylum. I don't pretend to be able to state which one."

His wife smiled, knowing that his cousin Henry was specially included in this animadversion. "Your mother

also told me," she went on, "that your sister Dorothy is taking a course in chewing her food very fine and very slowly so as to reduce her weight. She has lost five pounds in three weeks, she takes an eternity over every mouthful, eats next to nothing, and never felt better in her life."

Diverting as this announcement was, it served to increase Chauncey's mental perplexity. "But she wasn't stout," he protested.

"No, but she thought she was," answered his wife, "and that for a woman amounts to the same thing."

CHAPTER XXII

"MRS. CHAUNCEY CHIPPENDALE will be very glad to have Dorothy," said Priscilla. She had reference to the dancing class, and, as she spoke, she passed that lady's dainty note to her brother-in-law.

Blaisdell smiled appreciatively. The ease with which she had arrived at this desirable result impressed him as another proof of the efficiency and tact with which he had learned to credit Priscilla during the year and a half since his wife's death. It was she who had suggested the importance of obtaining Dorothy's admission to the class—thus confirming Lora's own solicitude; it was she who had offered to take the steps to procure this. How readily she had accomplished it! How civil—gracious, indeed, was Mrs. Chippendale's reply. Even if the concession had been partially inspired by his own show of power down-town, there was no denying that the attitude toward Priscilla of those able to grant social favors was very different from that toward his own wife.

Nevertheless, Blaisdell handed back the note with a significant nod, and said: "I didn't believe she would refuse this time. How poor Lora's heart was set on it! She never could understand why the door was closed upon her. Neither could I," he asserted a little sternly. "But, thanks to you, the child will no longer be boycotted."

He intended this to be a personal tribute and Priscilla felt it to be such. It was not the first sign of his approbation which she had received of late. As for the immediate topic, which the harshness of his phrase forced into fresh prominence, why dwell on it? Without treason to Lora she could refuse to be a party to reviewing the bitterness; refuse to probe for the precise causes of the refusal.

But Blaisdell chose to make his point plainer. "Perhaps Lora did not set about it in quite the same way. You understand these things better than she did."

It seemed simpler to Priscilla not to disclaim this discrimination between herself and his deceased wife. Perhaps the past consciousness of sundry contrasts to her own disadvantage drawn by him while Lora was alive helped her to let it pass without comment.

Blaisdell, however, construed her silence as an indication that, though she forbore to utter a word of disparagement, she comprehended his meaning. As he looked at Priscilla it came over him that the reason for his growing admiration of her was that she invariably comprehended his meaning; that her mind kept pace with his, and stimulated it, which was the essence of companionship. Her riper beauty made her girlish charms pale by comparison. She had become a woman of the world—the big world, just as he was a man of the big world. They understood each other. How her society had ameliorated his lot!

The months of her stay had slipped away without the slightest friction. She had looked after his children and presided over his house so naturally and engagingly that before he realized it his spirits were restored. There had been no differences of opinion between them; no signs of the restlessness which he had always ascribed to her.

He had sought to show his gratitude and appreciation by an open purse. Not coarsely, for she had more than enough money of her own; but by endeavoring to anticipate her wishes. And the delightful, engrossing part was that her tastes inclined her toward the very things in which he had always wished to become interested and to be given the proper lead. Dear Lora, who loved him so lavishly, had been more than anxious to fulfil this part; but had she not in the last years of her life lacked the requisite knowledge? Her chief social resource had been display. But Priscilla subordinated this to delicacy and imagination.

Blaisdell did not seek to evade this discovery. On the contrary, he hastened to apostrophize it as the crowning contribution of woman to the partnership of modern life. Here Lora had fallen short—loving little soul. Why shut his eyes to it? Her merits were a thousand; her failing only this. But to the mate of a leader like himself, how indispensable! Lora had been quicker than he to realize the need, and knowledge of the lack of it had embittered the cup of the darling's happiness. It was Priscilla who had drawn his attention to the increasing vogue of the impressionist school, enabling him to buy up all the Claude Monets in the market while the majority were still challenging the vividness of their landscape. She had taken him to see one of these and he had trusted to her enthusiasm so far as to purchase it on the spot, though his eyes were startled by the staring greenness of the grass and

the purple hues imparted to the tree trunks. At her suggestion, he had renounced allegiance to Faust and Fra Diavolo in favor of Richard Strauss and the Russian school. When in mourning one could go to the symphony concerts; besides, he liked to feel himself in touch with the most modern expression of every art. Priscilla's obvious intention had been to distract him from his sorrow. It was a double debt which he felt that he owed her and one which he was eager to repay. They had made many visits together to the studio of the sculptor who was moulding the bust of Lora, but Blaisdell had not yet decided who should paint his wife's portrait, cherishing the hope that Europe might be explored for the purpose. A trip to Europe in his sister-in-law's company might become a revelation also, and he would thus satisfy his desire to do something at once by way of showing his gratitude.

"I've a plan to propose which may appeal to you, Priscilla. Why shouldn't we go abroad, until the late autumn? I can get away now, and who knows when I may be able to again? When we return we can leave Dorothy to spend a year in Paris, to improve her French accent; you have advised that, you know. As for Hugo, if he insists on staying at home in order to sail his thirty-footer, he may remain here if he prefers and be monarch of all he surveys."

Blaisdell, standing on the lawn of his estate at Manchester-by-the-Sea, moved his hand expansively so as to include both the sixty acres, part woodland, part promontory, which his gardeners had transformed into a paradise, and the stretch of blue water reaching far as the horizon line—veritable ocean—which sparkled in the afternoon sun and broke in gentle waves on the rocky shore but a few rods beyond his feet. He had purchased this point of

land, which was situated further along the North Shore than the Chippendale and Langdon properties, six years before, at what had seemed to the community a staggering price. At vast expense, he had redeemed it from the grasp of wildness, uprooting here, blasting there, clearing away the tanglewood which concealed the picturesqueness of its boulders, and fertilizing the irregular soil between, so that roses bloomed luxuriantly just out of reach of the salt spray. A huge white colonial house and stables almost as large dwarfed the architecture of the neighborhood—this gold coast of New England—though most of the original plain brown cottages of the Boston merchants who, a generation back, had built summer homes at Beverly, had been replaced by ampler villas. It had been Lora's wish to follow fashion and build there. He could congratulate himself on his discernment, for he had already been offered as much again as he had paid for the site.

As Blaisdell concluded, Priscilla, sitting in the shadow of a shrubbery at a tea-table on the velvety lawn, reached out for a packet of letters—the evening mail—which lay beside the tray. Blaisdell liked his afternoon tea—hot or cold according to the atmosphere—and Priscilla was apt to be on hand to prepare it for him on his return from Boston. He had made a long day in town and the mail, including Mrs. Chippendale's reply, had been delivered shortly before his arrival from the station.

"Europe? Four months in Europe? It sounds exciting, Hugh. But how very sudden!" She seemed to ponder for a moment as if lured by the proposal. Then she shook her head with smiling resolution. "I couldn't; not this year."

"We should be able to decide on some one to paint Lora's portrait. Why not this year?"

"I have too many things to do."

"But the children are to go with us."

"Other things, disconnected with the dear children, strange as it may seem."

"Of course you have; I did not mean that. It's because you ought to have a vacation—a genuine vacation, that the idea occurred to me. I wish to do something to show you how deeply I appreciate all you have done for the children—and done for me, Priscilla. And I thought that a trip to Europe might be just the thing—do you good. It should be a real vacation; we will take Mrs. Avery to keep an eye on the children. We will go wherever you wish to go, see everything you wish to see; visit all the galleries, and you could help me to pick out first-rate things to bring home."

"It sounds very tempting and is very thoughtful of you, Hugh. Another year, perhaps. Curiously enough"—Priscilla smiled as if inwardly amused by what she was about to state—"I am thinking of taking a vacation—a very short one—a fortnight at the beginning of September." She drew one of the letters from its envelope as she spoke.

"Where, if I may ask?"

"I'm just looking to see. The name is Camp Natisgouche—somewhere in the wilds of Canada. It's a camping out party. I never have camped out in my life."

"Who has invited you?"

"Another of my friends—Mr. Sumner. The same party has been going there for several years. His sister, Mrs. Paton, and her husband, were the pioneers. This year they've done me the honor to include me."

Blaisdell glanced from her face to the open letter in her hand. "You have just received that?"

"I accepted a fortnight ago. These are the directions as

to what I shall need to take and wherewithal I shall be clothed."

He paused for a moment silent from dismay. "What do you expect to do there? Fish, I suppose."

"Undoubtedly."

"If you would prefer salmon fishing to Europe," Blaisdell began eagerly, "I am sure that I could"—Priscilla shook her head, and the previous look of amusement showed itself in her eyes. "In this particular party you may be sure that fishing will only be a pretext. I expect to live in a short skirt and do my own work. We shall tramp and picnic all day, and at night, by the big camp fire, tell ghost stories and discuss the problems of the universe. I know what it will be like; besides, I've been warned."

"Then why are you going?" Blaisdell had felt baffled by the definiteness of her refusal, but this playful irony was more encouraging. Bending forward to deposit his empty tea cup, he added expansively: "You had much better come to Europe."

Again Priscilla shook her head. "I should like to try—er—cooking my own food and discussing soul problems just for once. Perhaps I may like it; who knows?" Smiling, she bent her head to adjust the bunch of nasturtiums in the front of her spotless white frock. "Besides, I have promised Mr. Sumner."

The thought that she was planning to desert him even for so short a period, and at the bidding of this man above all others, warned Blaisdell that he had been living in a fool's paradise—a paradise the gate of which he had refrained from closing because he was so happy and lest he frighten its inmate by premature captivity.

"Suggest to him to invite you next year instead; that's what you said to me."

Priscilla looked up with quick solicitude at this display of pique. "It was as a sop to his feelings that I agreed to go. Now don't tell me, Hugh, that I have hurt yours."

"A sop to his feelings?" Blaisdell was conscious of a sudden desire to probe her relations with this disturber at whose instance she was threatening to leave him. What if he were unreasonable? The time had come when he was willing that she should suspect that he demanded a monopoly. Sumner was constantly at the house; but, despite the episode of the Bacchante, he had taken for granted that, however intimate their footing, Priscilla's attitude could not fail to be unequivocally Platonic. He had no grounds for thinking otherwise now, and yet the possibility gave a new aspect to the intercourse between them which stirred his blood and cleared his brain as on those occasions when all his powers were concentrated on carrying out a vital purpose by striking hard. He knew exactly now what course he intended to follow. His chief concern was that he had refrained so long from making his ultimate object unmistakable.

"Why, yes." Priscilla showed her readiness to explain. "It was this way. In those first months after dear Lora's death, when it seemed impossible that her clear-cut personality had been snuffed out like a candle, it occurred to me that, if there were anything in spiritualism, Mrs. Merrivale, the medium, might be able to get a clew and establish communication. It was a forlorn hope; I was a sceptic myself. I knew you didn't believe in psychic control, for I had sounded you. I decided to speak to Henry Sumner. It wasn't that he discouraged me; it was the intolerant way (as it seemed to me at the moment) in which he declared that not the slightest reliable evidence existed of any communication with the dead—that every alleged utter-

ance was a sheer triviality. He was so positive—that I lost my temper. Among other things I told him he was essentially narrow-minded. And we hadn't had a real disagreement for over a year."

She paused as if she wished before proceeding to impress this last fact on Blaisdell by way of extenuation. But, knitting his brows, the latter did not hesitate to exclaim: "He was tactless, as usual; you asked for bread and he offered you a stone."

"Exactly." Priscilla's countenance brightened. "But the interesting part is that he discovered that for himself; wrote me next day the most contrite of letters, apologizing abjectly for having let his interest in the subject blind him to the fact that what I really needed was sympathy, not dogmatism. Only think, he found that out for himself. Wasn't it a master-stroke of self-analysis? A seven league stride toward self-knowledge?" Priscilla paused again as if she expected some recognition of the sparkling interest which she displayed in this phenomenon. "Ah," she cried suddenly in the face of Blaisdell's deliberate silence, "I begin to despair that you two will ever be sympathetic. You never seem to make allowances for one another. You are both such good friends of mine and I have tried so hard to bring you together." She sat back in her chair with her hands clasped in her lap, dismayed by her melancholy conclusion.

Blaisdell leaned forward solicitously across the tea-table. He felt that the time was ripe for iconoclasm. If he forebore longer to disclose the clay feet of this grotesque idol, might not her strange readiness to pardon become infatuation? "You might as well expect oil and water to mix, Priscilla. Henry Sumner and I look at everything from politics to—er—love from a diametrically different stand-

point. I have tried to propitiate him constantly—you must have realized that—for your sake, and when I fail, I flatter myself that the fault is not wholly mine. My motto is 'live and let live'; no two men think precisely alike; and so the world advances. But this man"—Blaisdell shook his compressed hands to enforce his argument—" is what the world calls a 'stiff'—pardon the word. He is so self-righteously unbending that he can't see more than a few inches beyond his own nose. I rarely abuse anybody, as you know. The inexplicable thing to me has been how a whole-souled, warm-blooded woman like you has been able to hope that he and I could ever become friends. I have kept silent until now because it is the habit of my life to avoid enmities."

If Priscilla heard with wonder this show of rancor so unusual in her brother-in-law, remembrance of Henry's freely-spoken prejudice inclined her to listen without immediate protest.

"It was because you were both such dear friends of mine," she replied, "that I hoped for the impossible, I suppose."

"If I had been in his shoes—obviously a persistent suitor—would I have been capable of such density, such self-absorption and lack of consideration for—comprehension of you—as he exhibited in the case you just cited? I would have let you consult Mrs. Merrivale and derive any comfort you could."

"Yes, you would, Hugh." Vaguely troubled as she was by the introduction of this personal note, and by his open reference to Henry's courtship, Priscilla postponed analysis of their significance in favor of the response which rose to her lips and animated her features. "Don't you see that it was because he is so jealous for the exact truth—cannot

bear to have it deviated from or juggled with in the smallest degree—that he was so uncompromising? In the letter he wrote me he went on to explain at length why he thought that psychic research had failed to reveal anything of real value. I agree with him—but he lacks imagination; I wrote him so in reply. At the same time it dawned on me that it was because no one would have welcomed genuine results more eagerly than he that he is so relentless toward the—er—trivialities offered by self-delusion. He would love to believe them true."

"The wonder is he does not. I should have supposed such visionary, flimsy material would appeal to him," blurted out Blaisdell.

Priscilla regarded her companion with amazement. Was this her imperturbable, diplomatic brother-in-law? Alas! it seemed inevitable that the mention of the name of either should affect the other as a red rag a bull. Why should Hugh—the tactful Hugh—go out of his way both to ignore the palliation which she had just revealed and to seek to impeach the merit which Henry possessed? She shook her head saying: "You do not understand him a bit better than he does you. Constituted as he is, it would have been—er—even more impossible for Henry Sumner to believe it than for you. Yet," she continued—and as she spoke she rose, looking not at him but at the sparkling sea with the wistfulness of one investigating a tantalizing problem—"if he had been constituted just a little differently, he would have been one of the first to believe. That is one of the interesting things about these people—they have differences of administration but the same spirit. Did you know that his sister Lily has decided to practice Christian Science? Henry cannot bear the thought—because he is so clear-sighted. And yet they two have so much in

common. These people?" Laughingly reproaching herself for the use of the phrase she looked at Blaisdell. "One would think from the way I speak they were an alien tribe; whereas they are the aborigines; it is I who am different. At least," she added, and her qualification savored of doubt—"I have always prided myself that I was different."

"Different? You are as different from them as light is unlike darkness—as a whole-souled, glorious being is unlike a narrow-minded, ascetic one." Blaisdell's words vibrated with protest; at the same time their exuberance was caressing. Masterful still, the truculent air—so foreign to him—had vanished. For, gazing at her spirited profile—at her graceful yet abundant figure glowing with health and luscious energy, an absorbing need of immediate possession, electrified by an insidious dread of losing her, had seized on him and fused in a twinkling all other emotions—his dislike of Henry and his impatience at her tolerance of him—in the fiery crucible of passion. What mattered anything except his own ability to demonstrate the ardor and wealth of his devotion and her own readiness to reciprocate it? "You and I, thank God, breathe a totally different atmosphere, Priscilla," he added.

The purport of his words was not unexpected; but the fervor of their language and of his manner were not lost on Priscilla. What had restored and exalted his habitual urbanity? Her hands had strayed to the back of her head to replace a loosened comb, and she paused involuntarily with lifted arms to challenge the mystery of his demeanor. Her fine eyes were alert with the double perplexity of the current problem and of this conjecture. A sea breeze drawing across the lawn lightly stirred the wealth of wavy dark-brown hair which rose from her broad fair brow. She

looked, as she stood there, revealing her full stature, the embodiment of entrancing, intelligent womanhood, ripe for the arms of a lover.

She shook her head smilingly in query of his claim so far as it included herself. "Sometimes I think——"

Blaisdell, swift to divine the doubt, due, as he believed, to a waywardness which was more than half mockery of herself, stifled it with the voice of amiable command. "Don't be absurd, Priscilla. Do you think any one knows better than I what you are really like? What an exquisite evening it is! The sunset will be glorious. Shall we stroll to the Point?"

The desire to utilize his opportunity, plus the impulse to dispel her mood so that he might have her undivided attention, bade Blaisdell mask his fires. What more innocent and more likely to appeal to her than this walk along the shore—one which they often took together at nightfall—to that limit of his estate which encroached most on the sea?

Priscilla had risen with the intention of going into the house, but she acquiesced willingly. "Isn't it beautiful?" she murmured as if she had failed to take heed until now of the lucent softness of the landscape. She led the way along the gravelled path which bordered the lawn and wound along the shore. It was the hour when both hat and sunshade could be dispensed with, and yet a wrap appeared superfluous. The gentle breeze, still wooed by two belated sailboats which crept toward their moorings, was falling every minute with promise of a complete calm ere the radiance of sunset should suffuse the sky.

A short cut led from the gravelled path through a piece of woods already dusky with the menace of the approaching twilight. The soft brown carpet they trod was strewn

with pine needles; the gnarled roots of the tree trunks wore a fringe of fungus deep orange in hue. Priscilla, spellbound by a recent ardor for ferns, spied constantly on either hand, stooping now and again to examine or pluck one of her favorites. Blaisdell held his peace content for the moment to stroll protectingly at her side and enjoy the glamour of her presence. Who could compare with her in charm and dignity? With her as a wife his social future—that of Lora's children—would be so completely assured that he could banish all concern forever. For magnificently as he held out to his dead wife the promise of social leadership on the very strength of their isolation, and sought to comfort her by insisting on it, she had been more discerning than he. His loss had made clear to him beyond doubt that a barrier existed between him and the people whom Lora had wished to know. However invidious this discrimination—whatever its precise cause—if he married Priscilla, this barrier would fall once and for all. Here in itself was a reason for making her his wife, if no other existed. "Know thyself!" Blaisdell had always prided himself on self-knowledge, and he did not shrink from it now, even though acquired late and grudgingly. How completely Priscilla eclipsed in beauty and fascination the feminine flower of the Chippendale family, the only one of that arrogant stock whom he had had the opportunity to observe closely—Chauncey's sister Georgiana. For it was a part of his self-knowledge that the visit of this aristocratic young woman to persuade him to preside over the meeting of the friends of the Bacchante had flattered him in spite of himself. She had sat and talked with him for a quarter of an hour. He remembered vividly her bird-like head and soft eyes, her extreme daintiness of manner. There was something about her which he had recognized to be dis-

tinction. But she was not to be mentioned in the same breath with Priscilla. If the latter accepted him he would be able henceforth to snap his fingers at the Chippendales and all their tribe.

Egress from the short stretch of woods brought them near their destination, the extreme projection of the irregular headland composing Blaisdell's estate. The site of the house was at the highest point, behind them but further to the east. What lay in front sloped to the coast, but was still commanding. Its basis was the solid rock. Nevtheless, the thin covering of earth which had settled in its crannies had proved sufficient for the nurture of the hardy vegetation which at the time of Blaisdell's purchase covered it almost to the water's edge. His architect had cleared away the lesser growths, leaving only a single group of sentinel trees to lend themselves to his scheme of an oasis by providing picturesque shade. An undulating hollow in the rocks had been transformed to a rose garden, on one side of which stood a low summer house of artistic design dominating the shore in either direction. No other spot in the neighborhood afforded a more comprehensive view. Across the water to the right lay historic Marblehead, the harbor of which was now the favorite rendezvous of yachts big and small; and in the remoter distance, the peninsula of conventional Nahant, lair of the reappearing but mysteriously elusive sea serpent. (Mr. Harrison Chippendale as a young man had seen it off Egg Rock and sent an account of the experience to the *Transcript*). Far to the left was the fishing city of Gloucester and that long range of picturesque coast culminating in Cape Ann, a sea mark too remote for the naked eye save on the clearest days or when aided by the magic of mirage.

Priscilla was invariably fascinated by the combined

beauty and freedom of this retreat, for, though so prominent, the Point was virtually isolated. The intervening stretch of woods shut out the summer house from the scrutiny of the nearer eastern shore and a trellis of vines screened it from the powerful predatory telescopes of the dwellers at Beverly Farms. Here were wildness and the swish of the ocean, with a background of luxuriant verdure—that alluring combination of sea-side and country which renders this part of the New England coast so priceless in its charm.

To-night, in coloring, both sky and water were exceptionally beautiful. During their stroll the sun had dropped below the horizon and bathed the clouds in vivid hues now settling into a broad band of lucent saffron glory arched by delicate purples and grays, which is, perhaps, the crowning effect of twilight in this region. They had arrived at the very acme of the parting between day and night and Priscilla, with a murmur of rapture, seated herself to enjoy the too short pageant. The breeze had died completely away; the surface of the water was so smooth that it mirrored here and there the changing colors; the gentle lapping of the recurrent ocean on the dark-brown matted sea-weed of the barnacled rocks was the only sound which nature uttered. In the left hand of the two small bays, which this projection of the headland formed, Blaisdell's large steam yacht rode at her moorings, and along the offing on either side were other craft of varying sizes, some at anchor, two or three becalmed with drooping canvas. Upon one of the latter Blaisdell levelled the spy-glass which lay close to his hand.

"It's Hugo, the rascal—and all alone. It won't please him to be obliged to row ashore," he remarked with a chuckle. "Only yesterday he was imploring me to put an

auxiliary motor in his thirty-footer so as to provide for dead calms, and I suppose I shall have to."

There was something in his parental satisfaction which chimed in with the current of Priscilla's reverie. "You are certainly to be envied, Hugh; this is the most exquisite situation on the shore. You were very wise to buy it. One could never tire of it. And when one thinks," she went on, as if eager to account for a sentiment which might otherwise seem stale, "that all of this wonderful coast has been transformed in our lifetime—I will not say redeemed, for it must always have been superb; but its sternness has been subordinated to beauty by such men as you; and its stern spirit also, so that we who sit here spellbound by this lovely panorama of villas, lawns and gardens forget to think of the reef of Norman's Woe and of

> 'Old Floyd Ireson for his hard heart
> Tarred and feathered and carried in a cart
> By the women of Marblehead.'

The old New England is slipping away."

Despite the enthusiasm of her tribute, there was just a touch of melancholy in this last statement. Time's obsequies, like the leaves of autumn, touch the reverent heart. But Blaisdell, though he listened, was virtually deaf, for her opening words had provided him a cue and he was merely waiting for her to finish.

"The world, indeed, might envy me the possession of everything here—if I had one thing more."

His tone was significantly amorous, yet she remained puzzled. "What is that you lack, Hugh?"

"You. You as its real mistress. No limited tenure—but my wife in fee and forever."

"Your wife, Hugh? Your wife?" In her consternation

Priscilla spoke below her breath as if she feared that the boulders might prove eavesdroppers. She turned crimson and rose to her feet. Was she seeking to escape from the pavilion?

If such her purpose, Blaisdell barred the way. "You must listen to me. I am terribly in earnest." He pushed her back gently into her seat.

Priscilla covered her flaming face with her hands. She appreciated that she had reached a crisis in her life which she was powerless to evade.

"Have you not realized that I was desperately in love with you?" she heard him ask.

Blaisdell saw her shake her head. He paused a moment. "What is more, I have loved you from the day we first met."

She removed her hands and looked up at him. "How can you say a thing like that? It cannot be true."

Blaisdell had been willing to risk shocking her. The important consideration was to convince her of the genuineness of his passion; to sweep her off her feet by his unmistakable ardor. Was not this the surest method to win a woman of her nature? The way she would prefer to be wooed? He was prepared for the painful thought which visibly harassed her.

"It sounds like effrontery; but it is not; neither toward you nor toward the dead." He saw her wince with repugnance at the definite allusion to Lora. "How do I explain this? I was not conscious of my love at the time; I even struggled against it. You always piqued me; but I did not understand. We were boy and girl then. We have both developed since; and with growth comes self-knowledge. The best of mine is that I know for certain now—and can declare without treason to anybody—that all the

time and from the very first you were my affinity." He felt as he uttered this last word that it was felicitous—that it clarified the situation so far as he was concerned. "Yes, my affinity," he repeated. Quick to detect from her troubled gaze that its import was not lost on her, he reached for and grasped her hand and bending forward whispered: "I have been frank with you, Priscilla; so frank that you were horrified—repelled at the outset. Search your own heart, dearest; be frank with me. If I had offered myself to you years ago when we were in Dartmouth Street, would you not have said 'yes'?"

Blaisdell was satisfied with the cumulative effect of his audacity, for though Priscilla started and flushed vividly at this overwhelming question, she did not free her hand as indignant self-respect might have momentarily prompted, but sat with downcast eyes seemingly fascinated by his plea and his inquiry. Did not her willingness to tolerate his boldness presage victory? He had been politic as well as truthful in demonstrating to her that she was the only woman he had ever truly loved. She had been appalled by what she might have deemed his lack of delicacy in exalting her at the expense of Lora; she might demur a little still. But instinct assured him that she was a woman who would brook this more readily than consent to be his second choice.

The thoughts had been surging swiftly through Priscilla's brain. Genuine astonishment, not unmixed with dismay, at his declaration had been succeeded by willingness to listen born of feminine pride. Whatever answer she might make, such words from Hugh were sweet to hear. The next instant the comparison with Lora had distressed her by its lack of delicacy. Then while she still listened, his subtle but fervent explanation had procured

his pardon. She, his affinity? Here was a condition of soul which he was justified in divulging, if it were true; and such a thrilling phrase merited scrutiny on her own account. So far had Priscilla followed him when his direct challenge rang in her ears, bidding her turn a search-light on her heart. A search-light? She did not need to do so. Had not his accusation—almost a taunt—revealed the truth to her ingenuous spirit? She was ready to confess both to herself and to him the detected secret of her youth. The imperative need was to know if what had then been true remained so still. So the words sprang to her lips.

"And if I might have then, does it follow that I will now?"

Coming so close on the shock of his insinuation, this counter-question was far more propitious than he had dared hope. "Why should it not be true now as well as then? I have more to offer you, Priscilla."

"Have you?" The inquiry had the sound of being addressed to herself rather than to him. "We were boy and girl then; we have both developed since, as you yourself have said, Hugh." What did the secret garden of her youth resemble now that its latticed wall had fallen and it lay exposed to the rash gazer's eye? Did its roses still rival those in the rambling rock hollow close by, the fragrance of which reached her, or did they hang black and withered on their stalks? She knew, yet hated to look, and sought refuge in temporizing.

"I fully expect to die an old maid," she added.

Blaisdell did not seek to conceal his revolt from such a possibility. "How monstrous, Priscilla—monstrous and absurd. You, an old maid? You, in the ripeness of splendid womanhood—designed by nature to be a wife

and mother?" It was no time to mince his words. Such a repudiation of sex was a moral affront to a vital universe which no healthy lover could tolerate. "That mildew on the heart savors directly of the thin air of Boston."

Priscilla looked him searchingly in the face. "You would not have me marry you unless I loved you, Hugh."

"But if you loved me once, am I not the same? How have I altered? Do you not see that we are made for one another, you and I? Without the other each is incomplete. You will add to my life just what it needs to make us both supremely fortunate. You are the only woman I ever met who understands—to whom it is not necessary to explain. Think what I can give you, Priscilla." His brow and hand seemed to recognize no mortal limit. "Think what we could both together accomplish."

"I know, Hugh." She did not seek to deny the force of his burning language. The future which it depicted was irresistible save for one deplorable lack. "But if I do not love you?" There was melancholy in her tone. Alas! the roses hung lifeless on their stalks. And what had caused them to perish?

"How have I changed, Priscilla?" he repeated insistently.

Great wealth—power—good riddance to a single life, all these were within her reach. But she must encounter the scorn of Henry Sumner. The shadow of his disapproval lay directly across her path. Why had he interfered to blight her happiness? What had his vague insinuations proved? Her soul rose in its wrath but faltered, for the essential truth stared her in the face; murmur as she would, he had succeeded in blighting it, and the secret garden of her love had become a waste.

"It must be I who have changed," she said gently.

"You changed?" Blaisdell stared for a moment, then enlightened, as he thought, cried: "Let me implore you, darling, for both our sakes not to imitate the horrible mistake of the women in this community who test their love by a thermometer and, unless it records fever heat at once, stifle it out of existence. Many a life—two lives have been wrecked in this way. A woman who suspects that she loves a man will learn to love him a hundredfold more when——"

Priscilla rose with a little shiver. She was suddenly conscious that she was cold. The silver grays of the sunset had become dark purples and night was descending. "O Hugh, I am so sorry," she said.

"You will not consent?" he exclaimed aghast. Was it possible that he could not prevail?

"I cannot. Not now; not at any time, I believe."

Blaisdell snatched at this semblance of doubt. "Believe? I shall never take 'no' for an answer."

She shook her head. "I must go in now. I do not love you, Hugh dear. It would be cruel to us both to pretend that I do."

The firmness in her tone, as if her resolution had gained strength from utterance, struck Blaisdell to the heart and recalled his abhorrent suspicions.

"There is no one else?" he queried.

"No one."

The answer was prompt and explicit, but something in her expression—was it annoyance or self-distrust?—led him to add:

"You are sure?"

It was evident that Priscilla disdained the repetition, for she made him stand aside and let her pass before she replied—replied with a briskness which was an antidote to

sentiment: "I love no one, Hugh. As I told you, I have made up my mind to remain an old maid."

Blaisdell gave an ejaculation of disgust at the renewal of this absurdity; nevertheless, as he started to follow her, he protested: "Preposterous as that idea is, I could bear it better than that you should belong to some one else—whoever he may be." He emphasized the final words in the hope that she might guess the unendurable possibility which he had in mind, one which made spinsterhood alluring by comparison.

But if Priscilla understood, she ignored his allusion. The consequences of her refusal were already beginning to assert themselves and must be met—one in particular. Looking back at him she said: "I can't blame you for speaking, Hugh, but I wish you had kept silent for another reason. You will appreciate that after what has passed between us I cannot possibly remain in your house. I shall miss the dear children horribly, but when I leave for the camp I shall not return. Even you will agree that this is necessary for us both."

CHAPTER XXIII

WHY had Miss Avery left her brother-in-law's house and returned to her father and step-mother? Boston had understood that the arrangement under which she was to take the place of a mother to the late Mrs. Blaisdell's children was to be permanent. What had occurred to interrupt its continuance? The simple might believe themselves mistaken in having assumed that it was to outlast the time when the bereaved widower might fairly be expected to

take notice and find some suitable governess to succeed her. There were others who whispered that they knew better—declaring that in the eyes of a woman so superior as Miss Avery no other interest could vie in importance with the protection of these motherless children, and that something startling must have happened to terminate so felicitous a guardianship. Had her brother-in-law offered himself? And was her retirement to the seclusion of her father's house merely preparatory to capitulation? This was their shrewd suspicion. Presumably she had delayed announcing her engagement from delicacy in order that the conventional two years might elapse. Even Mrs. Harrison Chippendale was of opinion that in the due course of events a marriage between them would be both logical and becoming.

This mooted question was but one of the lesser ripples on the surface of current events. Indeed, Mrs. Harrison Chippendale's interest in it would have been languid save for the circumstance that her youngest daughter's caprice brought the presumptive bridegroom directly under their eye shortly after the time when Priscilla left his house. Where Georgy was concerned Mrs. Chippendale might be said to be clay in the hands of the potter. Georgiana and her brother Arthur were devoted cronies, and whatever the latter desired, his sister zealously abetted. Seeking to cater to his employer's social ambitions and thus help to feather his own nest, Arthur had been harping in his mother's ears on the proposition of inviting Jack Stoddard and his wife to dine. When Mrs. Chippendale finally assented she was plunged in dejection over the question whom to invite to meet them. To ask them alone would be no solution, but an insult—so she explained. Who should it be, seeing that they knew nobody and nobody

knew them? Arthur in dudgeon threatened to join forces with Georgy and ask them to dine at the club instead, whereat his mother showed signs of weeping; but Georgiana came to the relief of the situation by the proposal, "Why not invite Mr. Blaisdell and Miss Avery?" Then in reproof of her mother's consternation she added: "He is beginning to go everywhere. I thought him most agreeable the day I went to see him at his office."

"Yes, I remember; that harum-scarum expedition!" murmured Mrs. Chippendale. Her children were continually disappointing her by strange unexpected developments instead of following the barnyard treadmill of propriety. It was no girl's fault that she remained single—though three unmarried daughters stuck in her maternal crop; but that one of them should stray outside the coop as a so-called Christian Science healer had been a bewildering experience. And lately both Arthur and Georgy had been revealing symptoms of insubordination. From the point of view of the eternal fitness of things, Chauncey was certainly the most satisfactory of her children. She flattered herself that he had much of the sound conservative sense of the Floyds. She proceeded to point out that Mr. Blaisdell had never been bidden to one of Beatrice's dinner parties. It was one thing to ask Jack Stoddard out of kindness, and another to show a social attention to so conspicuous an individual.

At this Arthur took up the cudgels in support of his sister's astute suggestion. What a happy idea! In the eyes of Jack Stoddard, Mr. Blaisdell was a social star of the first magnitude, and to be one of the same company at dinner at the mahogany of a Chippendale would in his own estimation exalt him to the zenith of fashionable contemplation from which he could look down patronizingly on

the climbing myriads. Arthur met his mother's objection with the startling statement:

"Chauncey's a bloated bondholder; he can pick and choose. The rest of us are paupers, so we can't afford to be too particular."

"Paupers?" ejaculated his mother. "What do you mean, Arthur?" When she understood their figures of speech at all, she was never confident that her children were not quizzing her. And yet Arthur was supposed to have literary taste. Seeing that the North Shore property had increased so much in value and that they were reëstablished suitably in town, his cynicism, if the words were to be interpreted at their face value, was unintelligible and invidious.

"Comparatively speaking, he means, mama," murmured Georgiana, who was a proud young person in her way.

But Arthur was eager to point a moral. "All we possess in the world is scarcely enough to supply Mr. Blaisdell with breakfast food," he asserted. "He could swallow us at a gulp. And in my opinion he wouldn't have to strain very hard to make a square meal of our plutocratic Chauncey."

His mother set this down to hyperbole, as she did most of his statements. But Mr. Blaisdell's enormous wealth appeared to be unquestionable. To one of her own fashionable friends who had casually described a charity, he had handed a cheque for ten thousand dollars on the spot. Such off-hand munificence savored of the fabulous. Since both her younger children were bent on asking him to dinner, the easiest way was to submit—get it over and done with. "If your father has no objection, I will ask them," she finally said. "Every one con-

siders Miss Avery charming, and if, as people say, he is certain to marry her, I shall be glad I paid them the attention."

What Mr. Chippendale believed to be his own congenital readiness to adopt a progressive point of view came to Georgy's support when this matter was broached to him. Blaisdell? The man who had bought his house? His first impulse was repugnant. He listened gravely, fingering his goatee, while his wife informed him that the children had set their hearts on it, and made as plausible a case as she could out of the magnate's glittering benefactions and down-town prominence. But her husband's frown reënforced her own antipathy, and she reminded him that Chauncey still continued to draw the social line on the individual in question.

Nothing could illustrate the peculiarities of the Chippendale temperament more significantly than the result of this reminder. Mr. Chippendale mused for a little. He was egregiously proud of his eldest son's success, and yet he felt the responsibility of being watchful on Chauncey's behalf. The aim of his own life had been to avoid the coils of hide-bound conservatism. Was Chauncey sufficiently heedful of this vital necessity? This newcomer, Blaisdell, was not to the manner born; his methods were indisputably open to criticism on the score of—er—taste, at any rate; but taking everything into consideration (and here Mr. Chippendale congratulated himself on having as an elderly man one eye open when he was supposed by the younger generation to be asleep), had not Blaisdell so far won his social spurs as to make it incumbent on himself as a citizen of Boston—the Boston which counts—to let down the bars? He was the social head of the family; such an act on his part would be a hint to Chauncey not to

forget that the world was moving. His eldest son was unquestionably wide-awake where money making was concerned, but perhaps he needed to be reminded now and then that sympathy with well-behaved democracy is the watchword of republican institutions.

Thus communing with himself, Mr. Chippendale released his goatee and assented. When the invitations were issued Blaisdell sent an acceptance, but Priscilla pleaded a previous engagement. Having committed herself to the entertainment, Mrs. Chippendale decided to enlarge its scope. Jack Stoddard and his wife were obscured and thrust into the background by a smart company which included Mr. and Mrs. Paul Dudley and the Staunton Townsends. Partly from curiosity, but mainly from the desire to do a distasteful thing handsomely, Mr. Chippendale, after the ladies had retired, invited Blaisdell to occupy the seat next him, and when the family Madeira was passed and tasted, sought to draw him out on the issues of the day. Blaisdell happened to have at his tongue's end the results of a recent investigation concerning the transmission of malaria—that bugbear of Bostonians—by which it appeared that the germ is carried by mosquitoes. The other men hung on his graphic account of the experiments conducted, part of the expense of which had been borne by him.

"A remarkably well-informed man; I am not surprised at his success," whispered Mr. Chippendale to Paul Dudley as they walked together toward the drawing-room. As for the loquacious Jack Stoddard, he was overawed, hypnotized into ornamental silence for once in his life, so Arthur put it, by the dazzling company in which he figured. Arthur calculated that the success of the entertainment ought to serve as an entering wedge to a junior part-

nership for himself. And not only he but Georgiana was satisfied, but for a different reason; Blaisdell had made a bee-line after dinner for the small sofa where she was sitting and resumed the threads of conversation at the very point where she had dropped them on leaving his office.

A few months subsequent to this dinner party the entire Chippendale connection was plunged into mourning. Baxter Chippendale was dead; carried off in three days by pneumonia, that dread foe of the elderly. On State Street, which heard the news early in the forenoon, busy men paused for a moment to wonder how much the old gentleman would prove to be worth and to whom he had left his money. Every real estate broker in Boston said to himself that the house on Park Street would at last be for sale. Death had triumphed over individual obstruction to the march of progress. Some of them did not wait for the funeral to be over before ringing up customers on the telephone and privately calling attention to the opportunity.

It was recognized that his death had removed another of the few survivors of the old school. The following at Langdon, Chippendale & Company's (as the firm was now styled) and those who frequented the few other places where the deceased was accustomed to drop in with the regularity of clock-work, recalled anecdotes bearing on his idiosyncrasies—notably his downright tendency to disagree with his brother Harrison, and his surreptitious habit of keeping a tiny piece of tobacco under his tongue. The Republican party had lost one of the most reliable contributors to its campaign fund; Baxter Chippendale, unlike some of its younger constituents, took everything on trust and never asked questions. Of late years it had been a sufficient reason for him that his brother was a Mugwump to increase the size of his subscription. Surprise

was expressed at his demise by those in the way of meeting him, for they had not failed to notice a recent change in his personal appearance—a decided sprucing up of his wardrobe. They argued that he had passed the danger point of old age and was good for another seven years—might very likely live to over ninety and disappoint his logical heirs.

Baxter's taking off was the first break in the family circle which had occurred for years, and it came as a great shock to the older generation. The funeral took place at King's Chapel. His two sisters and brother as chief mourners found themselves in the tall box-like square pew under the pulpit where the deceased had worshipped for a generation. Leading the way down the aisle, Harrison Chippendale realized with distress as he reached the door that the narrow sidewalk was crowded with sight-seers. He became conscious, too, of the vicinity of the new huge department store which towered across the way, inviting an obstruction of traffic. The incidents savored to him of personal affront; he frowned and drew himself up. The crowd peered, jostled and pressed upon him despite the efforts of ushers to preserve a path. Where were the police? How different from the dignified quiet of many well-remembered visits to this historic sanctuary before his wife had ceased to be a Unitarian. There was a moment's delay in the arrival of the carriage reserved for him, and, as it halted before the porch, one of the horses reared. Mr. Chippendale slipped on the curb-stone and would have fallen into the gutter but for Chauncey's timely succor. The latter surmised that his father was unmanned by his uncle's death. Or was this sudden lack of coördination between the legs and brain a sign that his dear old governor was beginning to break up? Chauncey decided

to take the vacant seat in the carriage opposite to his father and mother. Harrison Chippendale had proposed, on the score of sentiment, that his two sisters and he should drive out to Mt. Auburn together, but Miss Georgiana had declared that she was unwilling to trust herself to any other coachman and horses but her own, and there were only two seats in her brougham. She had only just acquired confidence in the mate bought to replace the fat horse which had died.

When all was over the father and son drove back together from the cemetery. Mr. Chippendale had insisted on remaining to make sure that the family tomb was properly closed, though the three nephews begged him to delegate that duty to them and return with his wife. It was the last sad tribute he could pay the dead and, after all, was he not nearer to Baxter than the next generation could possibly be? Until they passed the Mt. Auburn gates there was silence; presently Mr. Chippendale said:

"Remember, Chauncey, when my turn comes, I am to be cremated. I wish what remains of me to be consumed by clean fire."

"Yes, father."

After another brief silence, Mr. Chippendale said: "Your Uncle Baxter was a man of spotless commercial integrity, and eminently sagacious. We were not—er—in accord on minor points, but underneath the surface each had an abiding affection for the other." He wiped his eyes gently as he spoke. "Baxter was a character in his way, and like most characters, he had a forcible way of stating what he believed to be true. But his bark was always worse than his bite."

Chauncey made no immediate response to this fraternal estimate. If he reflected that his father was idealizing

a little, he felt eulogy to be becoming at this moment. His Uncle Baxter had always seemed to him, ever since he could remember, what he might have termed a queer old guy. But he must have been shrewd in his time—worthy of reverence; otherwise how had he managed to lay up the fortune attributed to him? Chauncey's curiosity in regard to this matter led him to say—but deprecatingly, as if he did not wish to pry into the dead man's box prematurely: "He must have been a wonder in his day. General Langdon used to chaff him on being one of the richest men in Boston; he rather seemed to enjoy it—protested, but never denied it. Have you any idea, father, what disposition he has made of his property?"

Mr. Chippendale shook his head. "Not the remotest. Your uncle was a secretive man in many ways; he never made a confidant of me in money matters. On the contrary, he pretended to believe that I was extravagant because I had large expenses and held that the best contribution a well-to-do man could make to his family and society was to keep abreast of the times. 'Harrison,' I have heard him say, 'you're a spendthrift. If you're not careful, you'll land in the poor-house.' He never liked my detecting, years ago, that he chewed tobacco in secret, and reproving him for it. He always stuck to it that he didn't." Mr. Chippendale sighed. "Well, he's in Mt. Auburn—and we're not destitute yet. Poor Baxter! If he has left you children a comfortable slice of this world's goods, I fancy it will not come amiss in this age of extravagance, though personally I fear that our growing habits of luxury are tending to hamper the spiritual growth of the new generation." The next moment, as if his homily had led him to make a survey of the entire family, he added:

"By the way, what is this mention I see in the morning

paper of Henry as a possible nomination for Mayor of Boston on the Citizens' ticket?"

"The people responsible for that movement are talking of him, I believe. They can't get any one else to run."

Mr. Chippendale disregarded this lack of enthusiasm. Musing, he answered with kindling eye: "Stranger things have happened. Besides, you remember, one of my ancestors was a mayor of Boston."

"Boston was a village then, now it's a wicked metropolis. The Citizens' candidate has no more chance of winning this year than the traditional snowball in—." But, realizing that his father could not be familiar with the simile, Chauncey did not complete it, but went on to say: "They've offered the nomination to several people, I understand. They put it up to General Langdon with honeyed words on a silver salver; but he pleaded ill-health and gray hairs. 'They thrice presented him a kingly crown, which he did thrice refuse.' Learned that in English 17, father. I can't imagine wishing to be mayor if one were elected. It's the most difficult office in the gift of the people with a big P. Kicks and curses from every one with an axe to grind, if you're economical and try to make a record. Otherwise, you're a rascal."

"But some one must be mayor, and public spirit in Boston can't be dead." Mr. Chippendale turned inquiringly toward his son and his lip trembled. "I'm proud that I have a nephew ready to come forward and throw himself into the breach."

Chauncey ignored this indirect reflection on himself. He was anxious to make plain that his father took what he regarded as a visionary view of the situation. "He's a dead cock in the pit before he starts. Henry will get the support of the Back Bay and a complimentary vote in

Dorchester and Jamaica Plain; all the otner wards will plunk on one of the regular party candidates. Of course, father," he continued, warned by the tapping of Mr. Chippendale's foot that these utilitarian morals were deemed deplorable, "I believe, as you do, theoretically, in non-partisan politics in municipal affairs; but they're not practical; and, according to the masses, when the candidate comes from the Back Bay, they're not democratic. Every now and then when things get too bad—when the thieves become too bold—there's a reaction; the public gets busy and some Republican is elected. As I told you, father, Boston isn't what it used to be; it's a full-fledged, wicked city. Take the man with the most axes to grind, the most favors of one sort or another to ask from a city government—your friend Blaisdell, for instance—I wouldn't care to bet my bottom dollar that he wouldn't knife Henry in the back if there were any chance of his election." Then noticing that they were passing through Harvard Square within sight of the college yard and buildings, he added: "Henry is all right—public-spirited, as you say—but he's the same old sixpence at heart as he was fifteen years ago when we were all out here together. What makes me sore at the moment is that he wore a pot hat with his frock coat at the funeral. Did you notice that? Couldn't find his silk hat, he told me. Only Frenchmen indulge in that get-up. I will say for him that he recognized that he wasn't properly dressed. And, by the way, I wonder why his pretty stenographer took it into her head to come to the cemetery; and in black, too. I'm sure I recognized her. She used to do work for Uncle Baxter the last year or two of his life."

There was so much in these animadversions which he desired to answer that Mr. Chippendale was dumbfounded

and nearly held his peace. "Mr. Blaisdell is not my friend, Chauncey," he felt constrained to state. "I asked him to dine—er—because I thought—er—the time had come."

"That's all right, father," said Chauncey good humoredly.

Vindicated on this point, Mr. Chippendale felt encouraged to add: "I still think that Henry has done remarkably well—quite sustained the traditions of our family for public spirit and conscientiousness—er—in spite of an occasional lack of tact. As for the general tenor of your observations, they tend to confirm my own belief that both in state and national politics we are steadily going backward."

This speech happened to strike an answering chord in Chauncey's bosom. "Those fellows in Congress," he responded, "are doing their best to get us into a war with Spain. No sooner does the business of the country seem to be on a firm footing when some politician throws mud at a foreign power and unsettles credit." Chauncey spoke feelingly and as if the reminder worried him.

But Mr. Chippendale was off on another tack. "Ah, those pitiful reconcentrados—horrible! Such an abomination ought to be stopped. But I have always said that I hope not to live to see another war. As you wisely remark, the politicians of both parties," he added, nodding his head, "are fully capable of dragging us into one." Father and son had reached a comparative unanimity of opinion, though from a different angle.

During the forenoon of the following day, Baxter Chippendale's box at the Safe Deposit Vaults was opened in the presence of Mr. Chippendale and Chauncey and of Henry Sumner, who had been sent for by the two others. When no will was found among the papers in evidence on

top, it looked for a short time as though he might have died intestate. Further search revealed under the packets of securities a file of old documents among which was found an uncancelled will bearing date twenty years back. Chauncey's impulse was to peruse the contents on the spot, but his father resented this lack of ceremony.

"Your Aunt Georgiana will expect to be present at the reading of the will," he stated.

Accordingly the family met an hour later at Miss Chippendale's house on Beacon Hill, where Harrison, as its head, read aloud the terms of the instrument in the large drawing-room. These were simple and normal. Remembrances of five thousand dollars apiece were given to his brother and two sisters; bequests of one hundred and fifty thousand apiece were made to the Harvard Medical School and the Sailors Snug Harbor; and after the payment in full of these legacies, all the rest and remainder of his estate was divided among his nephews and nieces, share and share alike. His legal adviser—an elderly lawyer who had since died—was appointed the executor.

For a moment after Mr. Chippendale resumed his seat no one spoke. Uncle Baxter's intentions sounded generous; at the same time the charitable bequests were so large as to leave room for doubt whether the residuary clause was more than a hollow gift. Was he not capable of playing just such a grim joke on his expectant heirs-at-law? If this suspicion kept the older generation tongue-tied, Chauncey was able to be reassuring. While rummaging the contents of the safe deposit box, his sharp eyes had made a sufficiently shrewd inventory to justify the conviction that the residue, after paying the Harvard Medical School and the Sailors Snug Harbor, would be very substantial—his own portion enough to relieve the straightened

condition of his finances and enable him to purchase more shares of Electric Coke. If Uncle Baxter had purposed twenty years before to play a joke on the family, he had merely hoodwinked himself, so greatly had everything he owned increased in value. There were eight to divide among—seven besides himself—and, having done the arithmetic, Chauncey, as spokesman for the residuary legatees, said aloud:

"That's very generous of Uncle Baxter. If I'm not mistaken, it will mean—er—quite a respectable sum for each of the nephews and nieces." As he spoke he glanced round the room so as to serve congratulatory notice of the fact on those who were present—two of his sisters, Henry, and one of the Sumner girls.

"How much?" inquired Miss Georgiana bluntly, rubbing her nose.

"From the hasty examination which we made while searching for the will, I should expect it to be in the neighborhood of three hundred thousand apiece."

It was Miss Georgiana's turn to do a mental sum. "Mercy," she ejaculated, "was Baxter a millionaire? That means nearly three millions." She seemed to be a little disconcerted by the amount, which argued that her brother had got the better of her in their life-long contest. "Well, he nearly starved his servants," she murmured under her breath.

"Baxter was eminently sagacious—always a sound investor." Such was Harrison's tribute.

"What a stupendous sum of money," said Mrs. Sumner with gentle amazement. But, though she sighed, she rapidly adjusted her mind's eye to the advantages of a larger income. She cared nothing for money in the abstract; but she had been conscious for the last fifteen years

that her purse did not carry quite money enough to go round. Each one of her offspring would be happier and better equipped for successful endeavor by becoming well to do. The Patons were just a little pinched; and now, perhaps, Henry would feel more free to marry. Mrs. Sumner sighed again. Her children seemed fated in the natural order of events to prove dripping pans; and yet, as they were earnest souls, why was not this the working of a wise Providence?

Her brother Harrison interrupted this reverie only to chime in with it. "Well, Henry," he said, laying his hand on his nephew's shoulder, "I am glad that your uncle has remembered you so handsomely. You have made what may be called an uphill fight—er—financially, and I congratulate you."

"It won't be any too much for him if he's to be the next Mayor of Boston."

This remark proceeded from Miss Georgiana, who, under cover of her peacock feather fan, had appeared to be absorbed in watching her elderly butler pass a silver tray on which were cake and a decanter of sherry. Why had she not been notified the day before so that she might provide a more bountiful collation?

"Is it true, Henry, that you have been asked to run?" asked Mr. Chippendale. "I heartily approve of your public spirit. Even if the chances of election are slight—as I fear they may be—er—you are certainly a credit to the family."

"Who says he won't be elected? What do you know about it, anyway, Harrison?"

Mr. Chippendale had gone out of his way to sing his nephew's praises in the presence of the family circle, and was inwardly congratulating himself on the fulsome lan-

guage which he had employed when this harsh rejoinder grated on his ears.

"I was merely arguing on general principles, Georgiana," he replied with dignified meekness. "What chance has a gentleman to please the ears of groundlings?"

Miss Georgiana gave a snort. "He would have a better chance, I agree, if his name were Fitzpatrick or McCarthy."

"I hoped they would select some one outside the Back Bay; I recognize my limitations," said Henry. "But I shall do my best to win," he added, with so electrifying a lift of his head that Chauncey was prompted to ask:

"What are the odds? I'll bet you six to one that you're not elected; and, as father says, I'm merely arguing on general principles."

Chauncey's methods were well known, and this was recognized to be chiefly banter which did not require a specific response. The cousins gazed at each other with mutual forbearance.

"I hope you'll vote for me, Chauncey. Every vote will count."

"As often as I'm allowed. Moreover, I'll contribute liberally to your campaign fund. I impose only one condition."

As Chauncey paused and did not continue, Henry said: "Name it."

"That you send round that pretty stenographer of yours to get the cheque."

"Miss Brackett? Unfortunately she left my employ about four months ago."

"How very careless of you! She was at the funeral yesterday—at the cemetery."

Henry did not conceal his surprise. "She has done work

for Uncle Baxter, as I think I told you, and probably wished to show appreciation of his kindness. I have lost sight of her. I understood when she left my office that it was to take a more advantageous position in New York."

Chauncey did not impugn this statement further than to nod his head gaily and remark, "You must find her. I still insist on my condition."

There were various details to be settled before the family conclave separated. It was agreed that Chauncey and Henry should be appointed administrators in place of the deceased executor.

"There may, of course, be debts—obligations of which we know nothing," Chauncey saw fit to state by way of caution; but the cheerful expression of his countenance belied his presumption.

"Debts?" exclaimed Miss Georgiana. "Baxter could not brook them. He had his faults, but his motto was 'pay as you go.' He invariably paid every bill before the tenth of the month, like most of the Chippendales." As she spoke, the old lady directed a meaning glance at her surviving brother as if to question whether he had invariably lived up to this exemplary family tradition.

Chauncey's rising spirits prompted him to take up the cudgels in behalf of his father, and throw prudence to the winds. "Ours is the wicked branch of the family," he asserted gleefully. "Our motto is order anything you need and pay for it when you get ready."

Mr. Chippendale hastened to deprecate this rash utterance saying: "Don't give your aunt an exaggerated impression of—er—our foibles." His son's independence reminded him of his own, but there was such a thing as flying in the face of Providence. "I do not owe any man a penny in the world, Georgiana," he said proudly.

But Miss Georgiana disregarded this assurance, intent on rebuking her nephew. "The standards of the stock-broker are happily not the standards of this community," she said, agitating her peacock feather fan.

Chauncey could not resist, even at the risk of disinheritance, a sly allusion to her own talent for speculation. "I caught a glimpse of a certificate of Electric Coke in Uncle Baxter's box," he said in a low tone. "So you haven't a monopoly of all the good things, Aunt Georgiana."

Miss Chippendale seemed a little dismayed at the intelligence. "Well, it only proves that Electric Coke is a gilt-edged investment."

"Of course it is."

"Is it going higher, Chauncey?" she whispered.

"I'll give you eleven hundred for all of yours."

His aunt shook her head. "Then it's going up. Baxter never sold anything; and he was right."

Chauncey turned from this private dialogue to say aloud for the edification of all concerned: "Talking of city politics, I heard Mr. Blaisdell say the other day that twenty-five years hence Puritan Boston will be a Roman Catholic city. What chance has a Citizens' candidate against statistics?"

While the family circle was weighing this prophecy, Chauncey took his departure. As he reached the door he heard his aunt declare, "One comfort is I shall be dead." He returned to State Street in excellent spirits. He had deliberately made a very conservative estimate of his uncle's wealth. If his eyes had not deceived him, and no liabilities existed, he had little doubt that the share of each nephew and niece would be nearer half a million than the three hundred thousand dollars he had predicted. This sum would tide him over the present stringency in his

affairs, even if the disturbing flamboyant speeches of the politicians of the country should involve the country in a war with Spain. The important thing was that the estate should be settled as rapidly as possible. There must be no delay in taking the necessary legal steps.

Indeed, Chauncey was so much set up by his inheritance that he made another purchase of Electric Coke on the strength of it which caused a new quotation—1,125—for the stock. It was good collateral. He would borrow on it at the bank, and pay off the loan when the residue was divided. Moreover, he counted on securing eventually the shares which stood in his uncle's name. And if the question of corporate control arose, was it not reasonable to assume that whatever his Aunt Georgiana's prejudices concerning stock-brokers, she would be likely to prefer him to the omniverous Blaisdell?

Chauncey had been obliged to swallow the affront of the purchase of the Massasoit bank. He had finally handed over the family shares with feelings akin to those which a traveller experiences when ordered to hand over his valuables by a gentlemanly highwayman; there was no recourse but to submit. Only civil words were spoken, but the incident rankled. He was more than ever determined to dispute with Blaisdell the leadership of State Street, and what would constitute more effective retaliation than to wrest from his rival the management of Electric Coke? This would be a Roland for his Oliver with a vengeance.

The two cousins duly qualified as administrators with the will annexed. A few days later—and some three weeks subsequent to Baxter Chippendale's death—Chauncey remained down-town unusually late. It was nearly six o'clock and dark when he left his office. His affairs were on his mind. The new securities of sundry enterprises to

which he and his firm were committed were practically unsalable at the moment, because of the feverish condition of all the markets due to the war-like speeches in Congress inspired by Spain's attitude in regard to the belligerent Cubans. What was to be the outcome of this inflammatory talk? Chauncey was fain to believe that, as usual, it was merely bluster, for the manufacture of political capital. But was there not danger that the smouldering resentment caused by the destruction of the battleship *Maine* would be fanned by the persistent bombast of the legislators at Washington into a genuine conflagration which all the buckets of the administration would be unable to extinguish? And if so, what was to become of the poor business man? In the interval he was kept on pins and needles.

As he walked along the streets, comparatively deserted at this hour, thus chewing the cud of perplexity, he suddenly came upon Blaisdell. It was at a point slightly at an angle across the way from the large building in which was the office occupied by his late uncle. The two men had not met since Baxter's decease, and Blaisdell succeeded in imparting to his greeting that happy combination of condolence and congratulation which was the other's due. It was too soon for words, but a handclasp in the case of Blaisdell could be made to speak volumes.

"Working overtime I see," said Chauncey.

Blaisdell shook his head. "It's nothing extraordinary for me to be kept at the office until half-past six. I'm just on my way there now."

"I suppose when those patriots at Washington have nearly ruined the business of the country we shall wake up some fine morning to discover that the two governments have come to an agreement and that there never was any

chance of war." Chauncey revealed what was uppermost in his thoughts, and he was sufficiently nonplussed himself to be ready to hear an outsider's opinion.

"I doubt it very much. I am prepared for war—have been for weeks. We have been drifting steadily in that direction ever since the blowing up of the *Maine*. I understand on the best of authority that the members of both branches of Congress are in daily receipt of scores of letters from the West egging them on to avenge the insult to the nation—and—er—incidentally annex Cuba. We may possibly escape it. But perhaps the time has come to shake the bough and permit that isolated rosy pippin to fall into Uncle Sam's market basket."

Blaisdell spoke with his wonted assurance, and, though graphically, with the calm of one who has put his house in order and is waiting to see his judgment vindicated. The speech was obnoxious to Chauncey for two reasons. It ran counter to his own opinion; consequently he became more set in his belief that there was nothing but bunkum behind the diatribes of the politicians. In the second place, the cool intimation that the opportunity was favorable for misappropriating the island of Cuba disturbed his ethical equanimity. To be sure, in discussions with his father, who had lived for years in constant political dread that the government would find, sooner or later, an excuse for gobbling up this fertile but turbulent island, he had taken the stand that its possession by the United States was merely a question of time, the proposition emanating in cold blood at this moment from Blaisdell struck him as synonymous with stealing.

"I have expected and still fully expect to see the politicians come to their senses and this affair blow over," he replied. "I am loath to credit an ulterior purpose; to be-

lieve that this great nation is capable of taking advantage of Spain's predicament in order to grab——"

At this moment Chauncey's curiosity was so arrested by a sight across the street that he negected to complete his sentence. From where he stood he beheld his cousin, Henry Sumner, issue from the office building opposite, and, in company with a young woman dressed in black, enter a carriage which had evidently been waiting for them at the curb-stone. What fettered his attention to the exclusion of every other thought was that in the young woman in question he had recognized his cousin's former stenographer, Miss Brackett. He remembered the name and he was sure of the identity. It was dark, but the electric light had shone on her face, and Henry's figure was unmistakable. Chauncey craned his neck after the retreating vehicle and uttered an exclamation of amused astonishment. What did this departure together import? In denying knowledge of her whereabouts Henry had apparently been throwing dust in his eyes. The episode was open to one of two interpretations. Was his notoriously moral cousin a gay Lothario after all? Diverting as such a possibility appeared, was it not far more probable—much more like him—that, being now, on the strength of his inheritance, free to choose a wife, Henry had fallen a victim to the charms of this daughter of Heth and married her?

"Can't you let me into the joke?" Blaisdell ejaculated, seeing that Chauncey, oblivious of everything else, and convulsed with mirth, continued to gaze after the disappearing coupé.

"It's my cousin, Henry Sumner. I was trying to fathom why he should be driving off in a hack at this hour of the day with—er—a beautiful young woman."

"Our reform candidate for mayor?"

"The very same."

"Some client, doubtless; let us hope so. At any rate, may we not assume that the young woman is reasonably secure?"

Chauncey laughed gleefully. "Ordinarily we might. But there's a mystery here. I recognized her—and it's his stenographer. He took pains to tell me the other day that she had left his employ and that he had lost sight of her. I begin to smell a rat."

Blaisdell remained humorously impassive, but he pricked up his ears. "What do you suspect?" he asked casually.

Chauncey enjoyed the opportunity to give rein to his imagination at Henry's expense.

"Nothing perfidious; quite the contrary. In the case of any one else, we—er—might feel concern on the lady's account, as you pointed out. But it's of my puritan cousin I'm thinking. It is within the bounds of possibility that we have just pried upon the ostrich-like proceedings of a newly married pair."

"Married her, you believe?" Imperturbable as Blaisdell intended to appear, this was more startling than he had hoped.

Chauncey realized that he had gone too far. He felt the desire to retract. Blood was thicker than water; and, if the family linen had to be washed, Blaisdell was the last person whose confidence he would seek.

"I don't really know a thing. They may be going to take some dying person's deposition for all I can say. Or," he added gaily, shifting deftly the boot to the other leg, "who knows but we are all mistaken in our reform candidate, and he may be under the rose—er—a devil of a fellow?"

"Quite so," said Blaisdell. "But the incident seems to be shrouded in mystery?" he added.

"I cannot deny that."

Blaisdell seemed nonchalantly entertained. "And what did you say her name was, Chauncey?"

"Brackett—so he told me once. And I'll do Henry the justice to say that his taste is good. She's pretty as a peach."

CHAPTER XXIV

"A ROLLING stone gathers no moss." Such was Mrs. Avery's comment when she heard that Priscilla had resolved to forsake the labor of love, to which she had spontaneously dedicated herself, and return home to live. Priscilla recognized the innuendo—that if she were not less capricious, she would never get a husband. No wonder her step-mother indulged in insinuations. She could not bring herself to reveal the exact truth, and there was no denying that the explanation offered—Hugh's and her decision that the temporary arrangement had lasted long enough—was flimsy. The decision was so sudden—like lightning from a clear sky when everything seemed most serene. And the worst of it was she was conscious that even Lora's mother, after a brief protest of tears, would have accepted her marriage to Hugh as the best thing which could happen for all concerned.

If she had not flinched from the discovery of her own secret, she was no less honest in facing the bitter truth which confronted her that she had failed to rise to the occasion and throw herself into her lover's arms. How glorious such a solution would have been! The shame of having loved unawares would have been richly atoned for.

Instead, she had failed—and had let him go; dismissed him with no hope save what he might extract from the definite assurance that there was no one else. Night and the opportunity to reflect had merely set the positive advantages in higher relief. She and Hugh were the best of friends; she admired his great ability, she was very fond of him, and they would get on admirably; power and wealth were his to bestow, and it would be false humility to deny that she would be able to help him. He was right —they would make an effective couple. But why had she lost the capacity to thrill in his presence as if he were a demi-god now that she was free to yield to that emotion? She was growing old, and had lost forever, it might be, the illusion of youth; but as to testing her love by a thermometer, as he had charged, she knew better; the thrill had been unmistakable and she felt it no longer. One course was to give herself to Hugh by virtue of his credentials and on the strength of the past, the other was to seek the reason for the change.

She had sought the reason at the fateful moment when the yearned-for transports had failed, and had received as a reply from her intelligence that it was the fear of the scorn of Henry Sumner. That this other friend of hers was responsible she had no doubt; she had accused him to herself on the spot almost with indignation. She had felt like going to him and saying: "Restore to me the happiness of which you have robbed me." The opportunity to ponder had also warned her not to confound cause and effect. If this other friend had traduced him intemperately and falsely, if the proofs were admittedly lacking, and impalpable as air, what then? Could she fairly lay the responsibility on his shoulders? Must she not scrutinize her own heart for the sources of the change? Her own

heart? Her mind, rather; the mind of the typical Boston girl. It was she who had changed. The reason she could no longer thrill at her lover's coming was because his feet were of clay. There were no proofs still; his faults were impalpable as air—but, alas! she had detected them. The thin atmosphere of Boston had atrophied her soul and—and saved her from a horrible mistake. Like a true Boston girl she had put on moral eye-glasses.

The responsibility was hers. It was she who had changed. But, though she might not hold him to blame, she looked at Henry with fresh curiosity when they met on their Adirondack trip. What manner of man was this that even the winds and the seas obeyed him? Lank, tactless, self-righteous and socially self-absorbed, what was the secret of his power? It was not merely his desire for the truth at any cost, his relentless impulse to strip bare and protest against every deviation from the right as he saw it, but his unfaltering faith in the existence of the right and that there were truths which could not be explained away. What could not the others—what could not Blaisdell and the joyous democracy for which he stood, explain away? When brought face to face with the disagreeable or inconvenient, how speciously he could evade the responsibilities of the situation. At the touch of his assuring logic every standard yielded, and the firm foundations of principle crumbled smoothly as the landslide under the feet of the climber. So much, alas! had her moral eye-glasses made plain to her—that to be easy-going and tolerant of everything, to believe in nothing save money making and material comfort sufficiently to form enemies on account of it—was a creed which had lost its charm. And shrink from it as she would, was not her brilliant brother-in-law the protagonist of this very creed?

That first night beside the camp fire was much as she had pictured it. There were a dozen in the party, and while the big logs blazed and snapped, they reclined in shadow discussing a problem—if man or woman should cease to exist, which? Still conscious as she was of the humor of the situation, she felt that she belonged there. Henry lay nearest her. Her thoughts were far away, revisiting the blighted garden and planning for her future life. But she was conscious of him there at her side like a faithful watchdog. He was not obtrusive. He seemed (for once) to have divined that she wished to be let alone. Every now and then in the dark she would steal a metaphorical look at him when he loomed up in the direness of the contrast between him and Hugh. These looks were repeated on the following days, during the long tramps, the luncheons of hard boiled eggs and water, and the communion with nature in pairs. There was abundant opportunity for this new-fledged curiosity, since Henry was obviously the Jack to her Jill. Literally if a pail of water had to be fetched, they were expected to fetch it together. Yet from time to time a delicate hand—Mrs. Paton's—intervened and deliberately separated them for an afternoon lest the association seem too marked.

Priscilla was conscious, too, of resenting this interference. It suited her to climb at Henry's side up a mountain, or follow him single file through the woods, wrapped in her reveries, and let him do the talking. She heard what he said and listened or not as she saw fit. A word or two occasionally on her part sufficed—and the experience was restful. Henry was in a poetic mood, but a subjective one so far as outward manifestations were concerned. The ozone of the pine trees appeared to have stimulated his imagination, for he was fain to quote the poets by the

yard—sonnets of Wordsworth, the splendid sweep of "Paradise Lost," the classical metres of Clough, and from other wells of verse. He recited clearly, as if the background of the hills were the sounding-board he loved, and the pastime did not bore but soothed her. With others of the party—Professor Paton and Morgan Drake, for instance—it was necessary to converse. They were sure to suggest a problem and not to be content with monologue. She had been invited chiefly on Henry's account, but also because they all expected to be edified by her conversation. And she did not feel in the least like talking. Moreover, Henry showed no signs of exhaustion—of being talked out. Therefore on at least two occasions Jill managed to upset the precautions of Mrs. Paton and escape with her Jack, which caused sly remarks beside the camp-fire. Professor Paton proclaimed himself a tease; which might be the revenge of an unrequited love grown cold and transferred. Priscilla preferred this as an alternative to the indiscriminate discussion of problems with people who would not let her alone; and fortunately Henry showed no undue exultation. "I do not feel like talking," she had explained to him when inviting his complicity—"I just wish to tramp—and you may recite poetry." This was uncompromising surely, and if he were still foolish enough to weave romance out of it, she would have to run the risk of being obliged to undeceive him again. There was always the possibility that he might feel constrained to fall on his knees amid the silence of the woods and kiss her hand—but she would trust him.

Gratitude for this forbearance caused her to take another metaphorical look at him—an actual sidelong glance, in fact. At the moment they were reclining side by side, but with considerable space between, against a fallen tree

trunk on the borders of a sequestered, placid lake, the goal of a long walk.

"You have not told me anything about yourself lately," she said to explain her glance.

This brought Henry from the clouds. She had thrown the poor dog a bone. It had fallen between his paws, hitting him on the nose, so to speak, recalling him to this dim spot which men call earth. He had been spouting poetry and propounding metaphysics for the past ten days in apparent disregard of it so far as concerned him personally. Consciousness of the aroma of the hemlock in his nostrils and that she was constantly within easy reach—not seeking to escape from him, had been sufficient to detain him in the seventh heaven. But reminded of finite considerations, he had more or less to tell her. The Bacchante had found a niche in the Metropolitan Museum in New York; her protégée, Mabel Brackett, had left his employ for a position at a higher salary in New York; and the advocates of non-partisan municipal politics were hoping that General Langdon would accept a Citizens' nomination for Mayor.

Had not Henry and she always maintained that the comparative seclusion of an Art Museum was the fitting place for the meretricious statue? She must ascertain Mabel's address and keep a protecting eye on her in a strange city, now that she had so much time on her hands. So Priscilla treated the first two items of news. As for the Mayoralty, it opened up again and threw further light on that struggle, appreciation of which had helped to keep her silent all these days—the struggle for perfection of a handful of souls against easy-going optimistic democracy. Divine discontent—a constitutional tendency to pick flaws in the existing order of things—behold the two poles of nomenclature!

"Are both the regular parties so bad that you can trust neither?" she inquired, not hostile to non-partisanship, but impelled to break one more lance in behalf of joyous democracy.

Henry showed himself eager to explain. "We were anxious to avoid a third candidate," he said. "We besought the Republicans to nominate an unexceptionable Democrat and promised our full support. With the right person we could overcome the large democratic majority. But they were too hide-bound; the rank and file demanded a mediocre party man; would not stand for any other in the caucuses. It was a choice of evils. So what could we do? Surely we are right to register our protest. That's what our nomination of General Langdon means, if he accepts. I wish I were young and inexperienced enough to believe that he can be elected. Only a miracle could accomplish that."

It was clear that he wished first of all to exonerate himself from the imputation of being either an obstructionist or visionary. At the same time his kindling eye betrayed that, despite his disclaimer, he still cherished the hope that the miraculous might happen.

Priscilla mused a moment. "Democracy's constant peril seems to be that it idealizes second-rate people and standards."

"This from you? You lay yourself open to the charge of being an aristocrat and a malcontent."

"I know it," she murmured with a sigh.

"But you hit the mark when you said 'idealize,'" he responded brightly. "The cynic contends that democracy prefers the worst; which isn't true. It invariably yearns for the best; but it doesn't recognize it when it sees it. The world used to look up to its rulers because they were

superior to the mass. Now they prefer to have them as nearly like themselves as possible—a little smarter, perhaps, but otherwise just the same. That's at the root of our trouble in municipal politics. The multitude would rather have one of their own sort whom they know and call by his first name than General Langdon with whom they have little in common."

"You mean that our democracy is self-complacent?"

"You couldn't have chosen a more accurate word. Intoxicated, it might be said, with its joy in loose living. The people who say 'you was' and 'excuse *me*,' illustrate simply our happy-go-lucky tendency in everything from politics to manners. Each set asserts its own standards. Our complacent public is sensitive, too; it resents even tacit strictures. In the circles where women chew gum those who refrain are liable to be criticised as snobs." Henry paused. Priscilla realized that he had purposely not minced his words, and was speaking more satirically than his wont because he wished her to know that, however tolerant he had become, he had still the courage of his convictions. Nevertheless, despite the olive branch which he had extended to chronic doubt, he evidently felt that his bold irony required some justifying antithesis, for he continued: "The few who set themselves against the tide are certain to be sneered at and submerged. They are styled cold and censorious; often they are narrow and too conventional. But the impulse which governs them is not self-righteousness, but patriotism. With all their shortcomings their excuse for being is that they represent an appetite for perfection and abhorrence of looseness."

Why had Henry chosen this moment to reaffirm and crystallize his philosophy? Why had he seen fit at this juncture to put down his foot and define the boundaries of

his moral independence? After ten days in the woods together it was as though he had suddenly stopped short and said, "thus far I have followed you, but I will go no further." Was she a luring will-o'-the-wisp lighting a good man to destruction? These tart questions mingled themselves with Priscilla's consciousness that he was merely setting before her in concise terms the equation which had been haunting her own soul ever since her arrival. He was repeating what she had discovered for herself. But he was almost dispassionate; he had not even invited her to choose between the conflicting poles of life. He had simply, as it were, drawn a ring of fire and planted himself within it. Could her self-respect endure such presumption?

Whatever reply feminine waywardness might have dictated, Priscilla was spared the necessity of speech. While her emotions clashed a magnificent stag with spreading antlers stepped from the shelter of the wood two hundred yards away from where they sat, and, sniffing the air with the wariness of graceful wild things on the alert for danger, dipped his nose in the lake.

"Look. The pretty creature," she whispered, while Henry reached for his camera. He had brought a gun with him to camp, but had not used it, and only the night before had recited to her Emerson's lines on the delights of the woods without slaughter. What would an Indian squaw think of her brave? Blaisdell would have coveted the antlers. So she reflected—such are the vagaries of the feminine mind—as Henry took two careful snaps shots at the stately animal ere it scented some peril and bounded into the thicket.

The original topic was not resumed and camp was broken two days later. Priscilla's first need was to gather up the threads of life where she had dropped them in order to

assume the care of Lora's children. Her sojourn in the Adirondacks had merely served to strengthen her decision as to Blaisdell's offer. But their friendship must suffer as little as possible. A woman in such circumstances can always be trusted to desire this; and, to preserve it, Priscilla felt at liberty to leave Hugh free to convert her if he could. Indeed, if he could succeed in reproducing the telepathic spell, would not her hand be his reward? It was his due to let him try, and she could afford to run the risk.

Priscilla found Blaisdell accommodating. Far from taking umbrage at his rejection and avoiding her society, he made it plain from the moment they met after her return that he had no intention of accepting her answer as final, but proposed to win her if he could and to spare no endeavors to do so. Her virtual admission that she had loved him once—there was surely a loophole large enough to encourage a disconsolate lover. He did not obtrude this vantage point, but he kept it in the foreground by way of letting her know that he had not forgotten it, and that he relied on it as compelling in the long run. He made plain, too, that he considered it gave him the proprietary right of inquiry as to her attitude toward all comers. Toward Henry Sumner in particular. He insisted on specifying Henry as a rival; and ridiculous as he evidently regarded the latter's pretensions on grounds of congruity, he refused to credit altogether her disclaimer. Why had she gone to the Adirondacks? Was it not he who had poisoned her mind against him? Assuredly the source of her change of heart toward himself was to be found in her partiality for this hair-splitting reformer.

Urbanity, as we all know, was Blaisdell's invariable cue. Even when the depths of his nature were stirred, as now, he did not indulge in contumely. Doubtless he realized

that at the present juncture the disparagement of mild disdain which he had always bestowed on Henry would avail him little. What he now sought to emphasize was his conviction that, by gazing through the eyes of Henry, Priscilla had learned to look askance at himself. Though he shrank from the possibility that she could ever marry this pseudo-rival under any circumstances, he foresaw that she would remain obdurate toward himself so long as her faith in this other quarter remained unimpaired.

This was the point which he went out of his way to impress upon her. Such was the state of mind in which Priscilla found him on her return. A maddening policy this, the insinuation that logic demanded that she must be enamoured of a definite person because she had refused him. It could be treated only with becoming dignity. They were both dear friends, nothing more; and the obvious solace to her sensibilities—she uttered this in his presence to hear how it would sound—was that she would retain her faith in both and marry neither.

How destroy her faith in his pseudo-rival? How, at least, minimize his influence so that his own would again become paramount? Blaisdell did not quail before the consciousness that he had indirectly been aiming at this ever since they had first met. The answer which his optimistic nature provided was that the real necessity had never arisen until now. Hitherto Henry Sumner had been a side show so far as concerned his personal welfare; but now his dearest ambition was bound up in the need of removing the scales from her eyes and enabling her to see him as he really was.

Yet it was repugnant to Blaisdell that another enmity had been introduced into his life obliging him to meditate and have recourse to hostile measures to bring to pass

what he desired. Wide apart as the two cousins, Chauncey and Henry, were, in temperament and point of view, they had managed to antagonize him, each in his particular way, until the time had come when, for the sake of his own self-respect, it was incumbent on him to annihilate them—eat 'em up, as the current phrase was. So far as Chauncey was concerned, matters were shaping themselves toward such a finish; he felt no solicitude as to the ultimate result. But the problem of how to dispose of Henry, involving as it did the discovery of some flaw or inconsistency in the obnoxious traits which the latter displayed to the world, made him pause. Remembering that none are so blind as those who will not see, he recognized that, to shake Priscilla's faith in him, he must be able to confront her with irrefutable evidence to his discredit. Where was the antidote to this catalogue of virtues? Hypocrisy. This was what Blaisdell had always been fain to believe from the early days of their acquaintance. Though he had professed to take small account of Henry, he had been on his guard to catch him tripping. Was not one so notoriously self-righteous certain to possess some underhand besetting sin? The ordinary philosophy of life encouraged him to believe so. But thus far Henry, if precedent was to be trusted, had managed to elude him. As an alternative he had succeeded in consoling himself with the conclusion that his rival was an irreproachable sexless ascetic with pessimistic proclivities. But this felicitous estimate was of no avail in the present emergency. He must abandon it in favor of a further search for hidden weaknesses—a decision which caused Blaisdell to knit his brows in true perplexity for one of the few times in his experience. Paradoxical as his felicitous estimate sounded, his acute mind had adopted it as the real truth.

The death of Baxter Chippendale was a temporary setback to Blaisdell's still hunt for Chauncey. The inheritance of so considerable a sum of money must inevitably protract the contest for supremacy between them; for, while his rival on State Street might spread his wings on the strength of this large nest egg and indulge in fresh financial flights, this addition to Chauncey's resources could not fail to postpone the day of reckoning, even though hastened by an opportune foreign war. But tenacious as Blaisdell was of any ambition on which his mind was set, he bore with equanimity this temporary check by destiny for the reason that it had become overshadowed by his absorbing love affair. There would be time enough to settle with Chauncey when Henry was out of the way. And the problem of how to get rid of Henry was no less urgent than puzzling. The dangers of delay stared him in the face, and the feelers which he had put out through various channels of information brought back no results. Scrutinize closely as he would his rival's record, the reliable report in every instance was substantially the same —a visionary enthusiast, but, so far as any one could detect, immaculate in his private life.

To state that it occurred to Blaisdell at this juncture to weave a plot in which to enmesh this blameless antagonist would do him wrong. He went no further than to philosophize on how easily the rich and powerful of a not remote past were able to get rid of those who sought to frustrate their designs, and take some credit to himself for humane forebearance. Was not the progress of the world toward a higher level of morality thus signally illustrated? Nevertheless, when he listened to Chauncey's edifying words and watched the retreating vehicle in which he had just been assured that the hitherto immaculate and visionary

was ensconced with a nondescript young woman, Blaisdell experienced difficulty in controlling his exultation sufficiently to ask the proper questions. At the twelfth hour fate had delivered his rival into his hands fully bound. For whichever horn of the dilemma were correct, Henry's discomfiture was assured. Married—if his cousin's words were to be taken at their face value! A moment's sweet thought told Blaisdell that this was preferable to the conviction of rank hypocrisy for which he hankered. Such a consummation would not only leave the field clear to him forever, but save his own skirts from complicity in spreading scandal. He must proceed expeditiously but with caution. When were they married and by whom? Very likely the Citizens' candidate desired to conceal the interesting circumstance until after election. Provided the ceremony had already taken place, he could afford to humor this preference. The essential thing at the moment, Blaisdell reasoned, was to shadow the happy pair with the least possible delay and ascertain the true condition of affairs.

Three weeks later Boston was in the throes of a municipal election. But what would be the result of the triangular contest for Mayor was scarcely in doubt. Every well-informed person knew that the easy-going, unscrupulous Democratic candidate would be chosen by a comfortable majority. The excitement of the canvas centred on whether the broken-winded party hack nominated by the Republican machine or the so-called Citizens' candidate would get the most votes; a real issue because of the point of dispute involved. The stalwarts of the minority party contended that it was Henry Sumner's duty to withdraw and throw his strength to their candidate, who, though not an ideal choice, perhaps, was far preferable to his Demo-

cratic opponent. Unless they joined forces defeat was in store for both. Let the Citizens' candidate, who did not stand the ghost of a chance to win, retire in the nick of time in favor of ex-Alderman Barnard (the broken-winded hack), and victory was probable. Was not this the part of true civic patriotism?

A certain portion of the community—especially the Back Bay—was at loggerheads over the question. A large contingent of "solid business men" living on or in the neighborhood of Commonwealth Avenue, who believed in non-partisan politics in municipal affairs, except when it involved voting against a party candidate, shook their heads gravely and declared that Mr. Sumner's attitude was indefensible and Utopian. He was playing the dog in the manger; could not be elected himself and yet stood in the way of one who might. Ex-Alderman Barnard had promised a business administration. As business men themselves, they considered the refusal of the Citizens' candidate to retire as Willy-boy politics—a disparaging term. What else could be expected of a Mugwump?

On their side the supporters of Henry Sumner declared that the boot was on the other leg. A party Republican could not hope to overcome the normal majority unless there was a split in the Democratic ranks. The withdrawal of ex-Alderman Barnard would give a filip to the non-partisan movement which would sweep the Citizens' candidate into office, and deal a staggering blow to loose Celtic methods.

What? Withdraw after formal acceptance and prove false to those whose suffrages at the convention had made him the standard bearer of the party? A quixotic notion surely and worthy of the source from which it emanated. Such was the rejoinder of the regulars. The agitation

waxed fast and furious. There was wide and intemperate difference of opinion. A clergyman and Grand Army man declaimed against the obstinacy and lack of public spirit displayed by the Citizens' candidate. If the city was handed over to the tender mercies of a gang of thieves, no one else would be to blame. Even in the Sphinx Club, which might be termed the hot-bed of Sumner proclivities, there was an occasional doubting Thomas who inquired anxiously whether, inasmuch as the other wouldn't retire, it had not become Henry's duty for the sake of the general good, to go over to him. Wasn't a pretty good man preferable to a rascal?

"A pretty good man is like a pretty good egg—he destroys the appetite for perfection."

The retort was Morgan Drake's, yet it failed to convince the doubter. "But this is a democracy," he began, "and if we don't compromise——"

"Compromise? My dear fellow, modern life in once Puritan New England is a perpetual compromise. What opinions have we to-day which we are not ready to whittle away because we're afraid of hurting some one else's feelings and wish to make everything pleasant? Toleration is a favorite mare whose back has become sore from excessive riding."

Prominent among those who thus shook their heads gravely and spoke with plausible eloquence concerning Henry Sumner's refusal to reënforce the regular candidate was Blaisdell.

"A flagrant case of lack of true public spirit—to adhere to a lost cause from Utopian motives. A dog in the manger instance of self-righteous and obstinate personal ambition masquerading as patriotism." He had his cues, the stock phrases of the controversy at the tip of his tongue.

"Utopian" he liked especially. The dog in the manger analogy had been a contribution of his own to the amenities of the canvas. The speech was now addressed to Priscilla. The days of good-humored, but contemptuous ridicule of Henry were over. It was due to himself to bring to bear more stringent criticism, if only to let her see that he regarded him as the stumbling-block which stood in the way of his own happiness. He could see, too, that this nettled her, as if she were ashamed of the imputation.

But Blaisdell had realized of late that it behooved him to be careful that his criticisms were sound, lest they prove boomerangs. There was something in Priscilla's manner of listening which admonished him that she was weighing every word and that her intelligence was not to be trifled with. On this occasion Blaisdell felt he trod firm ground. Whatever his prejudices might be, this case was plain, the charges just. How often in the past had he and she agreed that virtue which ceased to be practical became futile. And Blaisdell had a further secret reason for complacency. He was calling on her at the moment—had come to see her on purpose to press his argument on the strength of what lay at the back of his mind. They had discussed the merits of the campaign on two occasions before the issues were less clearly defined and it had become apparent that the regular party candidate was doomed to defeat unless Henry withdrew. She had sided with Henry at the outset—he had expected this—but her remarks had shown that her mind, as usual, was open to argument. He had endeavored now to compress into a few pregnant sentences the unanswerable logic of the situation. Smiling affably, though his speech had been pungent, Blaisdell leaned back in his chair with the air of one who, believing his position unassailable, welcomes opposition.

Priscilla, who was making tea at the moment when he began his neat summary of Henry's shortcomings, paused in her preparations in order to resent one statement. "You misjudge Henry Sumner if you believe him to be actuated by personal ambition. Whatever the merits of the case, the nomination was forced on him. He appreciates the honor, but he is the last person to let mere egotism govern his conduct."

"Unconscious egotism, let us call it," replied Blaisdell with a twinkle of the eyes.

"Not egotism of any sort. He was not eager for the nomination, he is not eager to be Mayor; but he *is* enthusiastic about the movement."

"Not eager, but tenacious. I am familiar with the sophistries of these reformers."

Priscilla flushed. Despite his unruffled mien, this thrust, following his severe premeditated condemnation, seemed to her unwarrantably hostile. "But you are also aware, Hugh, that I know him very well—well enough, I think, to vouch for him on this particular point. The rest," she added, with a toss of her head which indicated that compared with the other she regarded it as a secondary matter, "admits of a difference of opinion. But if it comes to practical politics, I fail to see why Alderman Barnard is not the one to recognize the obligation by withdrawing. It is rather doubtful if he could be elected; it is practically certain that Mr. Sumner could."

Blaisdell held up a protesting hand in the face of this spirited retort. Her dark eyes were positively flashing. What mattered it? He was not averse under the circumstances to arousing her ire. "Your premises might be right if your statistics were not all wrong," he said indulgently. "Ex-Alderman Barnard has hosts of friends in

the Democratic party. All he needs is the moral support of a Citizens' nomination. As for your candidate, a majority of the voters of both parties would cast their ballots against him—and deservedly so in my opinion—for the reason that he is not only a hide-bound aristocrat, but both narrow-minded and unpractical."

Urbane in manner as Blaisdell still appeared, the asperity of the closing words was so marked that Priscilla asked: "Why so belligerent, Hugh? It is not your wont to be so —er—bitter. Your view of Henry Sumner's character is neither just nor novel. You have conveyed the idea to me many times before much more agreeably. You see," she pleaded, as she handed Blaisdell his cup of tea, "you are simply forcing me to be his champion. Mr. Sumner is my friend. I am well aware that you dislike him. Why is it necessary that you should so pointedly remind me of the fact?"

While he stirred his sugar Blaisdell seemed to ponder this outburst which had ended in a virtual plea for mercy. He might have been the traditional cat playing with a mouse. "What I wish to remind you of," he said presently, "is that your friendship for him stands between me and you. But for this I have every reason to believe that I should be the happiest of men."

She shook her head decisively. "You deceive yourself."

"You cannot deny that the change in your feelings toward me dates from the beginning of your intimacy with him."

"I am intimate with you both. Surely you are not so ungenerous, Hugh, as to begrudge me the privilege of two close friends?"

She had dodged his question, but in so doing had brought the conversation to the point which he desired, and he had

come primed. "Perhaps you do not know him so well as you think you do?"

There was nothing aggressive in the remark save its unexpectedness and that he seemed to wait for a reply, with his penetrating eyes fixed on hers and just the suspicion of a smile about his mouth.

"Possibly not. I cannot always fathom even you."

The blithe response was almost propitiating, but did not deflect his purpose. "You used, I believe, to be interested in a young woman afterward in his employ as a stenographer? Miss Brackett was her name, if I'm not mistaken?"

"Mr. Sumner. Yes, I recommended her to him."

"Have you heard from her lately?"

"Not since she moved to New York."

"If you inquire, you will find that she is at present in Boston."

At this point of the concise dialogue Blaisdell rose. He had disclosed all he wished to say at the moment. He had no desire to be in at the death and could trust to her keen intelligence to make the most of the scent he had provided. He started to take his leave as if their last interchange of words had been simply casual.

"Wait a moment, Hugh."

She was looking at him searchingly and appalled. She seemed to him suddenly to have become pale, like one whose faith in human nature had been rudely shaken.

"You wish me to understand—you insinuate by what you have just stated something discreditable to Henry Sumner?"

"Discreditable, Priscilla? The adjective is yours. I doubt if it is discreditable in the strict sense of the word. My chief insinuation was that one rarely fathoms one's friends so completely as one thinks."

"I fear that I have discovered a new side of you, to-day, Hugh. I——"

"Do not judge hastily. Wait until you hear the truth."

"I'm waiting to hear it now. I am not afraid of it." She drew herself up proudly. She had risen and was facing him. The pallor still lingered on her lips, and was it scorn which slightly curled them? "I hate mystery, and you know it, Hugh."

Though she had never gazed at him like this before, Blaisdell remained the embodiment of good humor. It suited him to have the poison work. The greater her revulsion, the more complete the shock to her self-confidence and pride, the more probable and sweeter his ultimate victory.

"The trouble is, I'm not perfectly sure what the truth is. I'm still in the dark as to the precise facts. When I know them I will enlighten you. It will be time enough—after election. If they are as I believe, everybody must know them sooner or later."

This was explicit so far as it went, but it left her tantalizingly at a loss. Her wits were buzzing with cruel conjecture. Henry involved with Miss Brackett? Such was the unit of Hugh's insinuation. Nothing discreditable? There was only one construction which could be put on this assurance—that he was seriously devoted—even engaged to her. Engaged? Why not married? For a moment Priscilla stood spellbound by the amazing thought. This was what Hugh meant—married. A wave of crimson mounted to her eye-brows and she tingled hotly with the fell surprise. He the long-suffering, he, the eternally faithful, had succumbed. She had exhausted his patience, worn out his fealty. Or had he tired of her? Priscilla felt like gasping. Should she laugh or should she

cry? While she stood thus paralyzed by the shock of bewilderment, she became aware that Blaisdell was regarding her with an expression where triumph and covetousness were mingled, as though he felt that the right to exult had already given him fresh license to woo. Improbable as it was that a man so able and shrewd as he would have hinted at such a revelation if it were void of truth, her mind repelled the conclusion that Henry had been playing fast and loose as something too incredible for belief. If he, the faithful dog, had gone astray, her trust in human nature was indeed shaken forever. It would be like the wandering of the fixed stars from their courses. Not that she had a claim on him; it was the dire inconsistency with his own consistent self—the self she supposed she could now read like a book—which she deplored. Loyalty, pride, and above all, the instinctive refusal of her positive nature to acknowledge itself deceived in her long cherished conviction bade her exclaim:

"I understand now what you mean. But I do not believe it; it is impossible. He would have told me himself, if it had been true."

The far-fetched assurance of the closing plea betrayed the dauntlessess which shuts its eyes and stuffs its ears with cotton wool. If she runs amuck—was Blaisdell's reflection—it will be into my arms. "Unfortunately for that view of the case," her tormentor answered suavely, "the circumstances appear to admit only one other alternative—one of which he would presumably have been the last to inform you."

Priscilla stared a moment before she grasped his meaning. Then she started; but she did not pause to choose between the horns of her dilemma. Was it dread, or indignation or sheer obstinacy which impelled her? Her

mind was on the rampage and recklessness had become the spur.

"In that event," she asserted with defiant lips and heightened color, "you will at least no longer be able to taunt him with not being a man."

Here was a cavalry charge in the teeth of the guns with a vengeance. The astounded Blaisdell could not restrain his mirth. "True, Priscilla, true," he said, while his humorous mouth acknowledged the desperation of her sally. "Certain apologies might then be due to our puritanical friend. But what concerns me much more deeply," he added—and as he spoke he stepped forward and grasped her two wrists—"is, that whichever alternative is true, you will no longer have an excuse for saying that you do not love me. None whatever."

Holding her arms apart Blaisdell bent his gaze upon her ardently and compellingly. If for a moment Priscilla seemed to feel that this liberty was the logical penalty for so rampant an indiscretion, she recovered her wits just in time to divine that it was preliminary to an attempt to embrace her. This she eluded by drawing back. At the same moment she vigorously wrenched her hands free, but without temper. Anger seemed superfluous; was not his very argument a justification in a sense for his advances? She felt beset by curiosity—the need of knowing.

"Cease to speak in riddles, Hugh. What does all this mean? Is Henry Sumner married?" She was calm—almost matter of fact.

"I am unable to answer that question categorically." Blaisdell paused a moment. "Mabel Brackett, is, however."

"Married?"

He nodded. "I have her own word for it; hearsay, but definitely reported to me."

"To him? To whom?"

"She failed to tell my informant; and I admit that the records at City Hall disclose nothing. Evidently for the sake of secrecy the happy lover, whoever he may be, avoided the local jurisdiction."

Priscilla knit her brows. She was asking her questions with the prosaic coolness of a cross-examining lawyer.

"And you believe him to be Henry?"

"The evidence certainly points that way. It either is or it isn't."

She winced a little under his air of exasperating elation. "Is this all you have to tell me?"

"All at present—all I know at present."

She drew a deep breath. "Until it is proved, I shall regard it as—er—an impossibility."

"I can't blame you for that, Priscilla. Such loyalty does you credit."

"When do you expect to find out?" she inquired hastily.

"Any day. To hasten disclosures of this sort on the eve of election might savor of malice."

"I should like to know what there is to know as soon as possible," she replied steadily. "In any event I seem doomed to be mistaken in—to lose one of my friends. Both perhaps."

Blaisdell did not flinch before the menace of her grave suggestion. "I am ready to stake my fate on the outcome," he declared meaningly. Though he had come primed, he was not quite ready to have his hand forced. Yet her impaitence demanded a response and he was not loth to hasten the hour of self-vindication. He reflected a moment. "Let me see," he said slowly. "Day after tomorrow comes the torch-light parade in honor of the Citizens' candidate, I believe. Naturally you will wish to

see it at various stages of its progress. If you will allow me to be your escort on that evening, I may be in a position to supply the lacking information."

"It will pass this house. I shall illuminate, of course. Why can you not——"

"That will not prevent. We can view it here first, if you prefer. You hate mystery, I know. But in this particular instance, Priscilla, I invite you to trust me. Will you play 'follow my leader' for this occasion only? Yes or no?"

The plan which he had in mind had formulated itself with such rapidity that clear-eyed satisfaction lent persuasion to his tone. The old fascination—the magnetic voice of command—seemed to possess her for a moment and exorcise both repugnance and scruples. He was inviting her to inspect the proofs. That was more than Henry had ever done in an analogous situation. Why should she refuse? Had she not proclaimed her total disbelief? Was she not tremulous to know?

"Very well," she said. "Since you deem mystery essential, I will not stand in your way."

CHAPTER XXV

CHAUNCEY CHIPPENDALE drew from his pocket the keys of his Uncle Baxter's residence on Park Street and opened the front door. As he walked up the mall of the Common opposite, having been detained down-town unwontedly late, the gathering crowd had reminded him that this was the evening of the torch-light parade in honor of the Citizens' candidate, and he had smiled sardonically. His cousin Henry in the limelight! Why not step in and view

the procession from his uncle's windows? What more advantageous spot could be found than the old-fashioned iron balcony which stood out high above the sidewalk on a level with the drawing-room and commanded the street from the State House to Park Street Church? He would find company, too, for had not Blaisdell only the day before asked permission to utilize the vacant premises for this very purpose?

The servants still remained in the house, but it pleased Chauncey in his capacity as executor not to ring. He happened to have the duplicate front door key in his pocket—had fastened it to his own bunch—in order that he might exhibit the house the following morning to one of his personal friends who was thinking of buying it for improvement. A speedy sale was desirable, but at the highest possible price. The brokers were competing against one another, and scarcely a day passed when he was not telephoned to on the subject.

As he stepped beyond the inner door into the rather bare hall, Chauncey paused to look about him. He had been an infrequent visitor during the last fifteen years. His uncle, never a sociable person, had become more and more of a recluse. Except for Thanksgiving day, he rarely took a meal in the houses of his brother or sisters, and though he entertained with old-fashioned stateliness when his year came round to give the family dinner-party, he never encouraged his next of kin to rely on casual hospitality. Yet to Chauncey the surroundings were familiar from old association, for nothing had been changed in forty years. Save for the dinginess apt to infest the belongings of the best preserved old bachelors, everything was exactly as it had been when in early childhood he had been brought by his father to visit his uncle every Sunday after

church and partaken of seed cake. Some of the quaint objects which met the eye—mainly of East Indian and Chinese origin—had impressed his youthful imagination. They still retained their hold on it; and he paused fascinated to renew his acquaintance with the pair of parti-colored vases, in the guise of gaping dragons, flanking the hall mirror and the long-handled spear affixed to the wall which tradition declared to have been brandished by a South Sea Island cannibal. In the adjacent dining-room, the door of which was closed, were to be found no less enticing chattels, notably two squat bronze idols on either side of the hearth, the carved ivory elephant on the mantelpiece, the octagonal mahogany wine-cooler, and—most interesting of all—the circular revolving tray occupying the centre of the dinner-table, to twirl which occasionally had been the favorite ambition of his childhood. As he turned the glass knob of the door he almost expected to behold the bald head and reddish brown whiskers of his eccentric uncle and to hear him ask brusquely, though not unkindly, as he helped himself by rotary process to the vegetables:

"Well, what brings you here, I should like to know."

During his preoccupation Chauncey had been aware of voices. He was prepared to encounter some friends of Blaisdell; but he halted before the identity of those occupying the room—his Cousin Henry, Miss Brackett, the pretty stenographer, Miss Avery and Blaisdell, all closeted together and obviously engrossed. What did this portend? Had they all met by appointment, and, if so, why? Chauncey's ordinarily alert faculties were befogged; he could not get his bearings. It flashed on him, however, that the conversation which his entrance had interrupted might very well concern Henry's relations to the fair stenographer.

He observed that she and Priscilla were seated at opposite sides of the round dinner-table. The former's back, which was turned to him, was rigid and her hands were interlocked in front of her. She was still in mourning. Priscilla's countenance was tense with haughty gravity. Behind her chair, resting his arm on the mantel-piece so that it hid from view the carved ivory elephant, stood Henry, looking like a martyr eager to go to the stake in behalf of his convictions. The only one of the party who seemed at his ease and as if he were enjoying the situation, whatever it might be, was Blaisdell, who had been in the act of speaking when he opened the door.

Surveying the group Chauncey cast a searching quizzical glance at his cousin. "I beg your pardon. I fear I am interrupting," he said somewhat pointedly, and he made a show of withdrawing.

But Blaisdell with cheery accent restrained him. "Your arrival is most opportune, Chippendale. We were discussing a matter—er—which concerns your family. I have had the misfortune to ask an impertinent question of Sumner, and you come in the nick of time to pave the way to a reconciliation—or further discovery."

"There is no offence," said Henry, yet his looks belied it. At least for some reason the words evidently came hard.

"But the difficulty is," continued Blaisdell blandly, still addressing Chauncey, "that I don't know exactly how to frame my apology. My offence consists in having congratulated your cousin on his marriage to this lady"—Blaisdell indicated Miss Brackett—"and my excuse for doing so must be common report and the circumstance that Miss Avery and I found them here together on our arrival; a circumstance which I freely admit, now that I realize my mistake, was not conclusive, but was extenuat-

ing in a way for the reason that I happened to be aware that they have passed several evenings together of late under this roof. Hence, I incautiously jumped to the conclusion that our Citizens' candidate had become a Benedick, and I yielded to the impulse to rally him on the interesting episode. Pardon this repetition"; Blaisdell interjected, turning toward Henry, "but your cousin should hear my apparent justification before he can hazard an opinion."

"I see no reason to discuss the matter further. There is no marriage." Again it was Henry who spoke; and a dead pause followed. So brief was the denial, despite its definiteness, that Blaisdell was content to let it speak for itself before he replied with a laugh. "Exactly what you said before, my dear fellow. I accept the fact, of course; there is no marriage—as yet. But you stop short there; and I noticed that each time the lady has said nothing. Moreover, I noticed the first time that you looked at the lady before you answered as if to afford her the opportunity to speak if she preferred. I've no wish to pry into your affairs, Sumner; neither has your cousin, I am sure; neither have any of us. But please remember that this is almost a family party. Miss Avery is one of your closest friends. I appeal to you if we are not justified in refusing to be convinced that you and Miss Brackett are not contemplating matrimony, are not at least engaged, and in asking whether my congratulations were not merely a little premature?"

Blaisdell had never felt gayer in his life. He was accomplishing his purpose, and yet he had kept the investigation on the harmless level of high spirits and lawful matrimony. The worst he could be accused of was a lack of taste in forcing personal inquiries. From the corner of his eye he could observe that Priscilla's expression, de-

spite an effort to seem amused, was grave almost to the point of austerity. Could she be otherwise than humiliated and disgusted at heart? She could not have failed to notice Henry's telltale glance to which he had called attention, and which clearly demonstrated that there was some complicity between the pair. "Pardon my insistence," he continued. "All is said to be fair in love and war, and our excuse—if we need one—must be that you are a public character and we are deeply interested in having the cat let out of the bag. You may pledge us all to inviolable secrecy."

It was difficult not to respond to such contagious, plausible badinage. Chauncey rose to the occasion at once. Rocking himself on his toes, he exclaimed gleefully: "Come, Henry, you are the one to apologize for keeping us so long in the dark."

Even Priscilla, though her soul felt limp and her pride at its lowest ebb, could not refrain from the ghost of a smile.

"This must stop right here."

The voice was Miss Brackett's. Though she still sat rigid with her hands interlocked before her, her expression as she listened to Blaisdell's deadly pleasantry had gradually changed from the wariness of one expecting attack to highly amused appreciation of what was being said. The unprotesting smile on her lips gave color to the suspicion that she enjoyed the soft impeachment that there was something between her and Henry. At least such was the interpretation which Blaisdell put on it. Moreover, as he proceeded, he had derived fresh confidence from the detection of a plain gold band among several jewelled rings which sparkled on her fingers. Priscilla also had detected this with dismay. She had observed, too, that Miss Brackett's eyes from time to time had strayed from the speakers to her own face as if she were curious to observe

the effect on her former benefactress of these salient insinuations.

Miss Brackett, though her tone was mandatory, still smiled as if much edified, and even loth to correct a misapprehension. "The appearances are against us, I admit," she continued. "Mr. Sumner and I have met privately; but there was a reason why. Since he doesn't choose to exculpate himself and relieve your anxiety, I must—for his sake. No, we're not engaged—or married. There *is* a secret here"—she looked full at Blaisdell as she spoke—"but it's not what you suspected. Oh, yes, I'm married"—she unlocked her hands and held up the finger on which was the wedding ring—"but it's not to Mr. Sumner. You were on the wrong scent. My husband is dead—and to save you the trouble of guessing, I'll tell you. I'm Mrs. Baxter Chippendale." She pronouced the words slowly, anticipating the sensation they must provoke, before the glare of which she decorously dropped her eyes. "His lawful widow," she added. "I was married to him a year before he died."

A blonde young woman with light hair inclined to curl and blue eyes, she was the opposite of Priscilla in appearance. She looked very pretty, though not in the best of health. Her mourning was becoming in spite of a superabundance of jet. Secure rather than aggressive, she awaited the effect of the bombshell which she had cast among them.

For a moment not a word was spoken; there was no sound. The statement was so appallingly explicit that no room was left for incredulity provided that she were in her right mind. But Priscilla felt her heart beating rapidly as after a peril which has passed, and what she had just heard had become for her an anticlimax. Instinctively

she looked at Blaisdell, not to enjoy his discomfiture, but to proclaim her own relief. He was sufficiently master of himself to conceal his astonishment. His cherubic countenance was still unruffled; it reflected even the egregious humor of the situation from the non-personal point of view; but he avoided her glance. His only hope, manifestly, was to nullify in some way the effect of this overwhelming disclosure by cross-examination. Bending his brows searchingly on Miss Brackett, he slipped into the late proprietor's arm-chair at the head of the table, anxious for the moment to resign the part of protagonist to one of the family, in order to listen and observe. To look at Henry, who stood behind her chair, Priscilla must have turned her head. Besides, though she felt certain that his record was clear, would it not be well to hear this strange story to the end before revealing her satisfaction?

The exuberant Chauncey was the first to find his tongue. "Uncle Baxter's widow? Married to him for a year? What do you mean, madam?" As an executor and residuary legatee of his uncle's will, did it not devolve on him to press the inquiry?

"If you don't believe me, ask Mr. Sumner."

Chauncey turned to his cousin. "Is this the fact, Henry?"

"Exactly as she states it."

"Humph! How long have you known this?"

"About ten days."

"He did not know it until I consulted him as my attorney," Miss Brackett, or, as she should now be called, Mrs. Chippendale, saw fit to remark by way of exoneration.

"Your attorney?" queried Chauncey.

"I wanted to know my legal rights. I knew Mr. Sumner

would tell me—er—honestly. I was employed for some time in his office."

"I remember you very well," said Chauncey. He would fain have added that it is a strain on the imagination to find that a pretty stenographer has suddenly become one's aunt.

"There were many things to discuss and this house seemed the most secret place to discuss them. That accounts," she said with a covert smile, "for our evening meetings. I had to convince him, to begin with, that my marriage certificate was regular."

"And it seems you have suceeded," said Chauncey gravely, with an interrogative glance at his cousin.

"There's no possible doubt, Chauncey, that this is Uncle Baxter's lawful widow. They were married outside the state. Uncle Baxter for some reason of his own concealed it from the family. I have investigated the matter thoroughly; the license is perfectly regular. We have threshed the affair out, and I am bound to add that Miss Brackett—I mean, Mrs. Chippendale—has shown a wish to act magnanimously toward the family."

"Magnanimously?" echoed Chauncey with a touch of haughtiness.

The light of relief was shining also in Henry's eyes, if Priscilla had but turned her head. His lips had been sealed until Mrs. Chippendale should speak, and, as he listened to the taunts of Blaisdell on the score of an engagement, he had realized that he was at her mercy. In view of her edified expression and of certain remarks which she had let fall during their recent association, who could foresee what she might not say? The evening meetings here had been at her suggestion. He had yielded to her reluctance to come to his office. Only a few moments before

Priscilla and Blaisdell had invaded their fancied seclusion, she had indulged in a thinly-veiled reference to the future which let him understand that she desired to share her newly-acquired wealth with him after a decent period of mourning had elapsed. While she did not tell him in so many words that her former foolish infatuation regarding him still endured, her solicitude at depriving him of his inheritance had been unmistakable. She had suggested accepting less than her widow's share of the estate until he checked her, and then she had indulged once more in the tender hint which, though demanding no answer, had left him appalled. What was more, she had previously taxed him in sly words with his pusuit of Priscilla. Her sentimental mood, egged on by jealousy, might readily have seized the opportunity afforded by Blaisdell to dash his hopes forever.

He had escaped; hence he had become light-hearted on his personal account. Yet he was conscious that the unpleasant responsibility rested on him to disclose without delay certain dire consequences for the family resulting from the new situation which confronted it.

"It isn't necessary to go into details," he responded. "I have made clear to her that the Chippendales and Sumners are not at liberty to accept pecuniary favors; nothing but what the law allows."

Whatever Chauncey's emotions on the score of seeing his legacy dwindle, here was a proposition to which his aristocratic soul spurred him to subscribe with dignified alacrity. He displayed a touch of his father's grand manner as he said: "If, as I assume, you are speaking of the property under the will, there is no room for difference of opinion. Whatever share Uncle Baxter's widow is entitled to receive under the law must remain hers and hers only."

"Uncle Baxter's will was revoked by his subsequent marriage," replied Henry. "That is the law in this state. It is as if there were no will. He died intestate."

Chauncey listened with bated breath to this terse statement. The will revoked? The information was indeed bewildering. Was his legacy cut off? For a moment he was at a loss; then his quick mind reasserted itself. What if the will was revoked? His uncle having died intestate, the family would surely inherit everything which this inconvenient widow did not. Half a loaf would be better than no bread, even though enjoyment of his own portion were postponed until after his father's death.

"I understand," he said with the *aplomb* of a ready man of business. "The widow takes her share and Uncle Baxter's lawful heirs, whoever they may be, the residue."

In his absorption Chauncey had taken for granted that Henry's pause after this fell announcement that the will was mere waste paper signified that the worst had been disclosed. Was it not the last straw, designed to break the camel's back? The burden of it was painful, yet like a true-hearted gentleman, he refused to wince. The surreptitious marriage appeared to him a family disgrace; but here, as so constantly in life, his point of view was colored by the fact that his own withers had been wrung. All family skeletons are hideous, but we endure some better than others. Had Henry, for instance, proved the offender —even fallen a victim to the epidemic then rampant in the community and married a chorus girl—Chauncey's sense of humor would doubtless have enabled him to view the blot on the escutcheon with comparative equanimity. But to have this grotesque skeleton pop out at him from the cupboard of the older generation was galling to his pride no less than to his pocket.

"The lawful heirs, whoever they may be." Henry repeated the phrase which his cousin had guilelessly uttered, because it corresponded exactly to his need. Far from being final, his statement as to the effect of matrimony on a previously executed will was a mere preliminary. He had paused because he stood on the brink of a chasm to the bottom of which he must consign the immediate pecuniary hopes of the family.

"And in the event that Uncle Baxter has left a posthumous child, that child would be his lawful heir and inherit to the exclusion of every one else all which his widow does not."

Again for some moments complete silence was produced by this conscientious endeavor on Henry's part to epitomize the complete truth. It was broken simultaneously by two sounds—the first a gasp on Chauncey's part accompanied by the ejaculation, "A posthumous child? Why, Uncle Baxter was nearly eighty"; the other an irrepressible laugh.

The laugh proceeded from Blaisdell. It was the sound of mirth, not of insolence; there was nothing offensive in it, though, on the face of the situation, it might appear to savor of merriment at a funeral. Its essence to every ear was chiefly a sincere but involuntary tribute to the never-failing irony of life. To behold this haughty lineage bite the dust was partial compensation to Blaisdell for his own defeat. Dame destiny had played into his hands to this extent, even though she had proved perfidious in respect to the main issue, and his philosophic sense of humor bade him doff his cap to her.

"But such things happen, and such is the case here." Henry's reply was addressed to Chauncey, but the laugh had not escaped him. Indeed, it served to remind him of

Blaisdell's presence, which, under the stress of the family predicament, he had temporarily overlooked. Pausing, he turned in his direction and said: "This is essentially a family affair, Blaisdell—and Miss Avery is a friend of Miss Brackett's, I mean Mrs. Chippendale's. Having proceeded so far, I had better finish. But I shall rely on your honor not to speak of this delicate matter elsewhere until it becomes generally known."

There was no escape from the conclusion that the caution was deemed necessary, yet it recoiled from Blaisdell's equanimity as from india rubber. "I appreciate the privilege of being the only complete outsider, and I shall be discretion itself," he answered.

The retort was intended no less for Priscilla's ear than for Henry's. Though he had not yet relinquished the hope of detecting some flaw in the mechanism of this extraordinary family skeleton which was careering about the stage with all the variety of a modern mechanical toy, Blaisdell, with his inherent faculty for meeting the inevitable, had already begun to face the serious possibility of utter frustration. The first symptom of this was the query which he was putting to himself whether the grapes for which he had lately hankered in the vineyard of hope might not be sour. Sitting silent and vigilant in his chair, on the alert for some means of deliverance and detecting none, he had allowed himself to wonder whether happiness were possible with a woman capable of sympathizing so freely with this eccentric scion of Beacon Hill. Would allegiance to the latter ever be compatible with perfect comradeship with himself? Thus speculating, he was not averse to admit the taunt that he was the only outsider present.

"What I mean is that Uncle Baxter's widow expects before long to become a mother," continued Henry. "The

child, if born, will be the legal heir to the remainder of his estate."

Once more there was silence. In the face of Henry's plain-spoken language both the women lowered their eyes. No one could doubt that from the Chippendale standpoint the worst had now been uttered, for the catastrophe was manifestly complete. Yet Chauncey, like one dazed and expecting the lightning again to strike, held his peace and waited. There might be something still in reserve. And after all, what was there to say? It was Blaisdell who spoke first:

"If Baxter Chippendale has left a child, no one can dispute that legal proposition. Which only goes to prove that truth is liable to be stranger than any fiction."

What appeared at the first sound to be merely a sage comment calculated to serve as oil to the troubled waters, arrested, nevertheless, Chauncey's attention by the form in which it was couched. Chauncey in his dire need was longing for a loophole of escape from the plight to which the family had suddenly been reduced, and for an instant he was tempted by the doubt thus subtly presented. He had somehow become conscious that Blaisdell was speaking for his benefit. What proof was there that the child was his Uncle Baxter's? This was what the other had intended to convey. And, if not his uncle's, who was the father of this infant still unborn? The only proofs of paternity were the widow's downcast eyes and Henry's say-so.

Chauncey pictured momentarily the scandal of a contest over his uncle's fortune based on such a claim. Instinctively he shrank from it as too flagrant a breach of taste to be seriously entertained; but though all his prepossessions were shocked by the lure, the thought came to him unbidden that, if it had been anybody but Henry, Blais-

dell's cunning insinuation might have merited belief. Where Henry was concerned such an alternative was simply impossible. Chauncey smiled grimly at the reflection, and turning suddenly to the widow, said, by way of dismissing the specious temptation forever as unworthy of the notice of a Chippendale:

"Allow me to congratulate you. The matter seems very plain. We—the family, bow to the fortune of war."

Before making this chivalrous announcement Chauncey, however, had paused just long enough to communicate the true import of Blaisdell's utterance. If the widow fathomed it, she gave no sign, but almost simultaneously its real significance dawned on both the others. Henry started angrily and clinched his fingers in his palms. He saw red and the indignant words, "I am prepared to vouch," had already gathered in the roof of his mouth in readiness to hurl, when Chauncey's magnanimous behavior rendered their use unnecessary, and left Henry presently thankful; for, come to think of it, what would his affidavit be worth save to vindicate his own personal reputation?

The effect on Priscilla was less dramatic, for her reluctant soul refused at first to credit her intelligence. Was that what he had meant? Surely not; he could not have descended so low. She bent an appealing gaze on Blaisdell to reassure herself and read only too clearly the guilt which he not merely took no pains to conceal, but on which he obviously plumed himself. His answering look told her no less plainly than speech could have done that he had deliberately staked everything on this last demeaning hazard and gloried in it. While she repelled the base insinuation, Priscilla, remembering her own wanton retort at their last interview, began to be dimly thankful that Henry's austere virtue, like an angel's aureole, bade defiance to every doubt.

It was its own searchlight to the miasma of slander, though the steadiness of it compelled her to eat her own words. In this moment and by this beacon she was conscious suddenly that she was taking the measure of them both, and of a feeling which was almost repugnance for her former idol. He stood revealed to her at last in all the urbane complacency of a spiritual opportunist whose plausible vitality was constantly employed in obliterating the landmarks of the soul. With a discerning shudder, she shrank enlightened from the easy-going democratic philosophy whose conception of excellence was to raze every mountain peak to the level of the plain with no more concern than it removed any other obstacle in order to erect a new apartment house.

But Blaisdell was again speaking. He was ever a good loser, and he was never certain that he had lost. He had partially fathomed Priscilla's gaze and deduced therefrom both some of her repulsion and that his cause was temporarily hopeless. Yet in proportion as his prospects of success diminished, the healing voice of consolation waxed louder. Perhaps he was to be congratulated after all that she had seen fit to reject his princely offer. Was it not well that she had let him see to what limits caprice would carry her before it was too late? Caprice, restless caprice, had been her besetting weakness from the first hour of their acquaintance.

"Hark," he said, "I hear music. It must be the procession. We must not forget what we came to see."

This reminder was felt by all to be timely. A diversion was welcome, for what further could be said at the present moment which would relieve the situation for any one of them? The new Mrs. Chippendale did all she could to relieve it by taking her departure in the cab which was waiting for her at the door. There are certain surprises

in life for which the only palliatives are time and silence, and this was one of them. But Blaisdell's bonhommie did not fail him. After the widow's departure he took upon himself to lead the way up one flight to the iron balcony overlooking the street. The procession was close upon them when they arrived, and the sloping descent from the State House was alive with a glittering body of marching torch-bearers who made up in enthusiasm for what they lacked in numbers. They bore transparencies with magnified portraits of Henry and pithy, semi-humorous mottoes inciting the citizens to do their duty. An old-fashioned, antediluvian parade, so Blaisdell said to himself; the same outlay applied quietly in various directions would do much more good. He entered gaily into the spirit of the occasion and at the proper moment, when no one was observing him, despatched a messenger to inform the advancing column that the balcony had been transformed into a reviewing stand by the presence of its candidate.

A sudden halt on the part of the torch-bearers, followed by a fresh and more concerted outburst of Roman candles, attested that this news had spread promptly and rapidly. Park Street was one blaze of light against a background of tree trunks and wide spreading branches on the Common. Certain of the residents had become prodigal of Bengal lights and other fireworks. In another moment there were loud cheers and calls for Henry, who had believed himself incognito. "Come, Sumner, this is not the occasion to hide your light under a bushel," cried Blaisdell, and even Chauncey, whose feelings were almost too deep for words, derived a temporary fillip from seizing his cousin by the arm in order to drag him forward. Recalcitrant for a moment from awkward diffidence, the candidate advanced to the front of the balcony and, lifting his hand to stay the

furious applause, proceeded to make a brief address to his constituents. He was no orator; there was no denying that. But Blaisdell had forgotten how well he could speak —how clearly and completely to the point, with a touch of proselytizing, intemperate zeal such as is liable to make converts. Might it not have been just as well to let sleeping dogs lie? Blaisdell, turning, saw by the light of the torches, Priscilla's profile, and realized that she was intent on the performance and proud of it.

While his cousin was still speaking, Chauncey managed to slip away. He was in no mood for small talk, pleasantry, or political enthusiasm. Elastic as he was by temperament, he knew that fate had dealt him a stunning blow. The loss of the money meant the total disarrangement of his financial programme at a moment when he had deemed himself exempt from further anxiety. To be despoiled in so extraordinary and summary a fashion of the reserves on which he had counted as a buffer against the chances of war and wherewith to recoup his previous losses was a depressing catastrophe for any man. And besides the pecuniary loss, there was the notoriety and family disgrace. Other old men might become the prey of their stenographers, just as other young men might rush into matrimony with chorus girls and the like, but the Chippendales had always been exempt. That was the sort of thing they never did; their record was conspicuously clear; and now one of them had done it. How terribly his father would feel; it would gall him to the quick, for the family reputation was his dearest hobby. The most desirable presumption was that his uncle was crazy; but this did not wipe out the mortifying episode. What material for the yellow newspapers when they once got wind of it! And ultimate concealment was out of the

question. A posthumous son and heir born to that Boston blue-blood, Baxter Chippendale, by a child-wife whom he married in his dotage—there was the blatant truth in all its grisly compactness, which a merciless press would presently vie in exploiting for the entertainment of a carrion-loving public.

And what would his Aunt Georgiana say? He had already wondered, and he asked himself the question again when, having passed the State House, he reached her front door. She had not gone to bed. On the contrary, the lights were still burning on every story, showing that she had been illuminating in honor of Henry. As he glanced upward he discerned dusky figures behind the white shades in the act of extinguishing the row of candles in the drawing-room windows. Climbing the stairs at a bound without ceremony he found Miss Georgiana superintending the process. A dread of fire was among her foibles, and only her intense ardor in behalf of Henry had induced her to run the risk of burning down the house through contact of the candle flames with the draperies. Ascribing Chauncey's appearance at this late hour to a desire to congratulate her on her loyalty, the old lady beamed upon him.

"Well, Chauncey, it was a great success, wasn't it? Did your father illuminate?"

"I feel confident that he did, Aunt Georgiana."

"It isn't often nowadays that one of the family does something public-spirited. They're all too intent on making money. I shouldn't be surprised if he were elected. I wonder where he was this evening. Thank heaven, we've escaped a conflagration," she added, for the last candle had just been put out by the superannuated maid.

Disregarding this dig at himself, Chauncey proceeded to

inform her that he had just left Henry perorating to a throng of admirers, and the servant having by this time withdrawn, he disclosed to her the news which had brought him. "I've something serious to tell you, Aunt Georgiana. So prepare yourself to be startled. Uncle Baxter has left a wife, who has just turned up. Moreover——"

"What? A wife?" she gasped. "What do you mean?"

"A lawful wife. Moreover"—Chauncey leaned forward and whispered the rest in her ear as if he felt that her sensibilities as a maiden lady would be in some measure spared by this consideration.

For an instant Miss Chippendale looked as if she were about to have a stroke of apoplexy. But anger and curiosity soon got the better of her agitation. "A child? Baxter—a child? Why, it's improper, Chauncey!" she almost shouted.

"Far be it from me to disagree with you. And there are —er—legal consequences which make the matter even worse."

"Worse? How could it be worse? Improper is the only word to express it." She was sitting bolt upright now, plying her peacock feather fan. "Who told you? Who is the woman? What does it all mean?"

Chauncey imparted the complete details with fluent brevity. When he had finished his aunt lay back in her chair as if familiarity with the scandal had made her limp. "Why, Baxter—you old rat," she murmured; after which she declared, "We've never had a family skeleton before."

"And the peculiarity of this one is that before long it will be alive and kicking," Chauncey could not refrain from suggesting.

The humor of this remark pleased him—the only foil to a dark outlook, and he rose to depart. There was his father still to be informed of the catastrophe, and subsequently the suppressed mirth of the city to be encountered, not to mention the worry of his finances. As he walked down Beacon Street his aunt's allusion to his lack of public spirit and absorption in money-getting lingered in his mind. She was fond of badgering him about his want of culture and had never reconciled herself to his having owed his start down-town to prominence on the foot-ball field; but her tartness was apt to leave his buoyancy unimpaired.

To-night, in his chastened condition, he found himself admitting that for a member of one of the first families of Boston he was imperfectly educated and probably a little selfish. Somewhat deficient, too, in reverence? It had seemingly been otherwise with the older generation; they were not daft on athletic prowess and money-making. Henry was more like them—but Henry would always be a crank; and his own father had never been a crank, though he still knew his Horace and Daniel Webster by heart. Why was he only half educated? What was the trouble? He could hardly throw the blame on Harvard College—for he had not given the college a chance. There had been plenty of facilities for study, but it was not the fashion of his set to take advantage of them. Perhaps his ignorance was in the air; the desire to make money was, at all events. It cost so very much more than formerly for the first families to live.

One thing, however, he was muscular and healthy, and not afraid of work. At least he could claim that the younger generation were manly and knew how to enjoy life. Chauncey braced himself with this more comforting thought and

squared his shapely shoulders. He shared, too, with the older generation the family pride—and it was grievously touched. Confound Uncle Baxter—why had he defaced the ancestral tree? He would be able to hold his head up—for family disgrace was no longer potent in the world as once and every tub stood on its own bottom—but the lustre of the Chippendale record was indisputably tarnished by this senile marriage. By one of that older generation, too—an eccentric all his days, but nevertheless a Chippendale.

The lights in the paternal mansion were still burning. Chauncey found his father in the library with the latest volume relative to the disputed military operations of the Civil War open on his lap, but his head was nodding. He appeared a little mortified at having been caught napping, and held up the volume for his son's inspection.

"I've always maintained that McClellan was not backed up by the civilians at Washington, but this book demonstrates that he was a great procrastinator."

It was typical of Mr. Chippendale's progressiveness that he was capable of owning up to error even at the expense of a pet theory. Something perhaps in his son's expression led him to inquire: "But what brings you here so late, my boy? Your mother has retired. You have seen Henry's cohorts, I assume. I may say it is one of the regrets of my life that—er—circumstances have not shaped themselves so that public life was open to me."

Chauncey was glad to hear that his mother had gone to bed. Her horror at the news which he had to tell would have served merely to heighten his own perturbation. His father might take it hard—but after all, he knew that he could rely on his father's dignity, and he felt the need of guidance. Had he been too precipitate in congratulating

the widow on her good fortune and, so to speak, legitimatizing his uncle's unborn heir?

He began by cautioning his father as he had his aunt to be prepared for a sensation, but it was evident from Mr. Chippendale's violent and distressed start when the news was revealed that secret matrimony on his brother's part was one of the last contingencies the listener would have imagined.

"My brother Baxter married? And to whom? Henry's stenographer? My dear boy, you are surely dreaming."

"Unfortunately, father, it's the gospel truth. What's more, there's a baby—coming."

Mr. Chippendale looked aghast at his son in horrified blank amazement. He said no more at the moment, but joining the tips of his fingers he waited to hear the rest. His refined features wore a pained flush, but he was obviously intent on schooling himself to face the bitter blow with becoming fortitude. Was he assisted in so doing by the reflection that his brother's life had to all intents and purposes been a sealed book to him and that they had virtually been estranged since middle manhood? Yet the responsibility could not be wholly evaded; it clamored for recognition; for were they not of the same hitherto irreproachable stock?

He sat listening while Chauncey narrated the details, interrupting now and then to ask a question and revealing his further concern on learning that the legacies of all his children had been cut off by the revocation of the will. At length he uttered the commentary: "I have lived to see many strange things happen in Boston, but this is the most unexpected of all. I do not question your uncle's right to choose a wife, but—er—for one of his social stand-

ing, with a foot in the grave, this surreptitious marriage was certainly unseemly."

"Call it an ugly mess, father, and be done with it," cried Chauncey, throwing overboard for the occasion his half-formed purpose to cultivate reverence.

Mr. Chippendale mused a little. "Apparently there is nothing to be done to better the situation," he remarked tentatively.

"Henry assures me that he has made a thorough investigation and that the marriage was perfectly regular."

His father inclined his head, and pondered the matter in silence for a moment longer. "And this lady—the bride"—Mr. Chippendale pronounced the word with the reluctant resolution of one nerved to swallow castor oil—"where is she staying?"

Chauncey, who had neglected to inquire, hazarded the opinion that presumably it was at the South End.

"Find out for me as soon as you can," continued his father. "I shall feel it my duty to call on her."

"To call on her?" Though Chauncey spoke interrogatively, it was not by way of challenge. His laugh expressed not merely personal solace but admiration. His father was going him one better as regards magnanimity.

"She is my brother's wife, and as such I feel it incumbent on me to pay her my respects, however distasteful the association on—er—abstract grounds," explained Mr. Chippendale quietly.

"You won't be disappointed in her looks, I'll say that for her," was the answer, after which the exuberant Chauncey indulged in this philosophic tribute: "When it comes to a tight place, what a game sport you always are, father."

Mr. Chippendale sighed and his lip quivered, but he

did not disclaim the filial tribute. "No other course is open to us," he said gravely. "We cannot afford to wash our dirty linen in public, even if there were reasons for so doing. Good-night, Chauncey," he added rising. "Your news has left me a little shaky, and I'll go to bed."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE city election resulted in the choice of the easy-going Democratic candidate for mayor, as nearly everybody had expected. The surprise of the ballot for most people was that ex-Alderman Barnard, the broken-winded hack of the minority party, was third in the race—a poor third—receiving several thousand less votes than the despised Citizens' candidate. Here was a moral victory for independence in municipal politics; also for Henry personally, in whose honor the Sphinx Club gave a complimentary dinner. Some of the solid business men, while deploring a continuance of loose methods at City Hall, comforted themselves with the reflection that an accommodating and eloquent Celt might be less trying and more practical than a stern and unapproachable Puritan who would poke his nose into everything without tactful discrimination.

The election took place in December. During the following April Congress declared war against Spain, and all minor controversial problems in Boston became overshadowed by the burning question—are we trying to steal Cuba? The martial clamor of the masses elsewhere, whose humanitarian instincts were stirred and who "remembered the Maine," had forced the hand of the govern-

ment while Boston was still flattering itself that the oratory at Washington was merely bluster. Half of surprised Boston shook its head disapprovingly and believed in an ulterior purpose. The forbidden fruit was ripe, and though the tree was being shaken in the name of liberty, Uncle Sam could be relied on to see that it fell into his basket—such was the sinister prediction which many worthy people, our friend Harrison Chippendale among the number, indulged in. A war for the sake of humanity was laudable if sincere and necessary; but was not the freeing of the Cubans merely a subterfuge to conceal subsequent spoliation?

Some color was given to this conscientious dread by the attitude of a portion of the community. Blaisdell was a case in point, a shining, persuasive exemplar. He was one of those who, having referred to the war as both righteous and necessary, would wink knowingly at the proper moment. "What else could we do?" he would inquire. "We had to interfere; and old mother Spain is a proud nation. The psychological moment had arrived, for common humanity demanded that we cleanse our back-yard and guarantee the independence of long-suffering Cuba. If you inquire as to the final outcome, the reply may fairly be that we may leave this to destiny." Here it was that the wink came in. "When we consider how wealthy the island is and how very close to our shores, and of what highly inflammable material these patriots are composed, is it not conceivable—is it not probable that, in order to save the cutting of more throats, they themselves may invite us some fine day to annex this fair aspirant for freedom to our galaxy of states?"

"Which means, I see, the sooner the better from your point of view," answered Priscilla, who happened to be

listening when Blaisdell was thus exploiting the theme in the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Avery, for the inventor was among those who harbored solicitude on the subject.

"Certainly; the sooner the better. Why not? If destiny not greed is responsible, the national conscience remains clear. And as for the welfare of the islanders, can any one doubt, apart from ethical considerations, that annexation would be by far the best fate in the long run?"

"But we mustn't reason it out in cold blood like that—there's the point, Hugh. It's wrong. Our whole justification for going to war with Spain is to secure them their complete independence, and to remain unconscious of anything else."

"Which I should be the first person to offer them and the last to withhold so long as they desire it." Thereupon Blaisdell, who seemed to be brimming over with amiable candor, turned to Mr. Avery and said: "Priscilla insists that it is incumbent on us to shut our eyes tight so that the left hand cannot possibly know what the right hand is doing."

Not having been behind the scenes on previous occasions, Mr. Avery did not know the secret of his daughter's impetuosity. The idea had for some time been germinating in his mind, planted there through sundry hints from his wife, that her marriage with Hugh was probable and the best thing which could befall her. Ascribing what seemed to him the slightly exaggerated conviction of her tone to a kink of the eternal feminine growing out of some lover's quarrel, Mr. Avery said:

"I sympathize with your scrupulousness, my dear. But Hugh simply means that the best intentions on the part of our people and government are liable to be set at naught by ethnological considerations beyond our control."

"Exactly. One would think that very plain. But nowadays Priscilla seems to discover signs of an ulterior purpose in nearly everything I say."

Though he claimed to feel injured, Blaisdell's dogged speech had as a mainstay his growing readiness to declare that the grapes were sour. His tone was meant to convey to the initiated that the logical punishment of her open tendency, ever since that fateful evening on Park Street, to challenge most of his statements, was that it depreciated her fitness as a wife.

On her side, as she listened, Priscilla asked herself what better occasion she could have to enlighten her father in regard to the state of her heart. For she had guessed that he had entertained the hope of her marriage. At the same time she would be able to define to Blaisdell more clearly than she had found the opportunity yet to do the deep distrust which his conduct had inspired in her. Neither of them had seen fit to allude directly to the circumstances of that meeting. The sensational facts were still a secret save to those to whom they had been divulged. The press had not yet unearthed them, and Mrs. Chippendale's child was still unborn. But Priscilla felt that the chief outcome of the episode for her was the light thrown on Blaisdell's character—a light which gave a new interpretation to every action—almost to every word of his in their past relation. Comrades, in a sense, they might still remain for the sake of that past, but lovers—impossible henceforth.

"Yes," she rejoined. "It's melancholy but true that Hugh and I have agreed to disagree on all the fundamental questions of life."

The vast scope of this protestation led Mr. Avery to continue to believe that he was privy to a lover's quarrel.

"What was the use? He wouldn't have understood," was Morgan's reply when asked at the club what his answer had been. "After all, Blaisdell—damn him—was right. It *is* introspection that kills my books. Wanted—a burning cause! I've found one; not the genuine article; but a pretty fair imitation. And the fellow was right again, too, in saying that when I return from Cuba I shall have something to write about. He thinks that's the chief reason why I'm going. But, oh, lord, what a hopeless specimen he is when it comes to anything in life not written in capital letters."

Morgan became forthwith a hero at the Sphinx. His enlistment was plainly a gratuitous response of his spirit to the bugle call, for his forty years and want of physical robustness were a certificate of exemption in themselves. Perhaps the examining physician who passed him discovered the furnace in his soul. His example proved contagious among the younger men, though at the outset there was no uniformity of sentiment at the club as to the necessity for the conflict. Of his contemporaries in age there were several who betrayed signs of envy of the opportunity.

Morgan Drake and Henry passed the evening together on the night previous to the departure of Morgan's regiment for the south. When war became a reality, Henry had instinctively cast sheep's eyes at his father's sword. Though not wholly free from the family doubt voiced both by his mother and Uncle Harrison—are we trying to steal Cuba?—he felt the glow and recognized that, had he been younger and the need more imperative, he would have enlisted also. But for the moment his hands were tied. He was not merely the mainstay of his mother and sisters; it would ill become him to grasp at glory and desert the family in its hour of adversity when scandal was brewing

a bitter cup for them all to drink. His immediate duty was plain and he acknowledged the reasonableness of his mother's plea. "There is no dearth of recruits—younger men. The country does not require you yet. Wait and—er—let us see what happens." Eleanor Sumner had never begrudged to the cause of freedom her husband's life; he had fallen in the service of the state for a great cause. But the issue here seemed more obscure to her exacting mind —at least for the present.

Though he did not deem himself at liberty to reveal to Morgan the family secret, Henry felt no need of apologizing. Theoretically he, too, was among those who envied his friend this opportunity, but it was taken for granted between them that Henry must stay at home. Yet in one of their pauses Morgan hazarded what was clearly his only doubt. "How does she take it?" he asked, as if he feared that his friend's mistress might not be equally discriminating and love's labor thus be lost. It was a proud moment for Henry to be able to reply, "She volunteered the other day to tell me that she recognized my place was here, and gave me at the same time to understand that she realized how much I longed at heart to go."

"Bravo!" cried Morgan. "That sounds perspicuous at least. My prophecy may yet prove true—that she will fall some day into your arms with a dull, sickening thud."

Among the spectators who watched Morgan's regiment as it marched past the State House and down Beacon Hill the following afternoon was Harrison Chippendale. He had been calling on his sister Georgiana, who was ailing, though she protested stoutly to him that she was strong as a horse—and he came down the front doorsteps just as the militia were abreast of the house. Martial music invariably stirred him. It brought back his own youth—the

days when he, too, was a soldier. That had been a deadly conflict, no flash in the pan war. He was one of the few of those lining the sidewalks who lifted his hat as the stars and stripes were carried by him. He felt that the government had been precipitate—but these recruits were certainly a fine lot of young fellows. His lip trembled at the sight of them as they tramped by to the tune of "Marching through Georgia."

When the regiment had passed Mr. Chippendale crossed the street and descended the steps of the Common that he might walk home by way of the Mall and observe the squirrels. They were certainly beginning to increase again—no doubt about it. He had noticed a number with bushy tails only a few days previous, and here they were again. It certainly looked as though Miss Georgiana's and his protestations were bearing some fruit. This might be a sign that the institutions of the country were beginning to improve. He hoped so, in spite of this untimely war and the haunting secret of his brother's unsavory marriage. Chauncey had told him by telephone that morning of the baby's birth the night before. His visit to his sister had been partly for the purpose of imparting this news to her. She had repeated her stricture, which Chauncey had passed on to him, that it was improper. Mr. Chippendale as a progressive man could not subscribe to this. Nature was constantly harassing—hostile even, but never improper. The infant must be faced like the rest of the episode with becoming fortitude. Its arrival had clinched the situation by disinheriting his children, and disclosure of the mortifying circumstances could not long be deferred. He consoled himself with the thought that he had called on the widow without delay. He had tried to be gracious, and she had reciprocated his affability. She was an unformed per-

son, but extremely pretty. A young man might have been pardoned for the infatuation, but for Baxter—unless he were senile—there was no excuse.

Thus communing with himself Mr. Chippendale passed from the Beacon Street Mall to the Public Garden and pursued his way along Commonwealth Avenue. As he turned to mount the steps of his own house he was accosted by a young man, who, as subsequently appeared, had been waiting for him.

"Mr. Chippendale, I believe?"

"Harrison Chippendale; yes, that's my name."

The tone was distant. A challenge on the owner's part of the right to claim acquaintance was clearly suggested. At the same time Mr. Chippendale was passing through a mental struggle whether in case of an appeal for alms it would be his duty to refer the applicant empty-handed to the Associated Charities or he would give him a quarter to be expended inevitably in drink. Like the "game sport" his son had depicted him to be, he was in the act of feeling in his pocket when the individual, whose hands were behind his back, glibly remarked: "I called at your residence fifteen minutes ago, but was told that you were out walking. So I've waited to see you."

"What is it you wish?" was the reserved, dignified inquiry. Leaning on his cane at the foot of the steps, Mr. Chippendale barred the way, though it was obvious that the stranger was expecting an invitation to enter.

"I desire your opinion on a certain matter." The speech was virtually feline in its gleeful deference.

"Pray state your errand, sir."

The would-be visitor removed his hands from behind his back. In one of them he held a newspaper which for the moment he thrust into a side pocket in order that he might

produce a card which he presented with a flourish. "I represent the Boston *Mercury*, and desire the honor of a personal interview."

The *Mercury* was the most sensational of all the local newspapers. Mr. Chippendale knew it only by repute; he had never set eyes on a copy. He stared at the card, but did not take it. "A reporter? I have nothing to say to the press on any subject. I'm a private citizen whose views are—er—unimportant. The public would not be interested in any opinions which I might express."

This was intended as final. Mr. Chippendale with a bow turned about and began to ascend the steps. But the reporter keeping pace with him exclaimed: "Pardon me, sir, you are one of our first citizens. As such every opinion of yours carries weight with this community."

For an instant Mr. Chippendale was caught in the honey of this appeal. "Not at my age. It may have been so once; but is no longer. Times have changed in Boston." By this time he had reached the vestibule and was fumbling for his keys. But his complacent companion stood at his elbow.

"Times have changed; but I assure you that the readers of the *Mercury*——"

"It will be impossible, sir. Good afternoon."

"Stop a moment, Mr. Chippendale. Have you seen this?" As he spoke the pertinacious but unruffled scribe produced and exhibited the newspaper which he had thrust into his pocket. "I was about to say that, interested as the readers of the *Mercury* would undoubtedly be by any public utterance of yours, I apply to you in this instance as the fountain-head of the information desired."

Ignoring the proffered newspaper, Mr. Chippendale wiped his feet on the mat and opened the front door. His

courtly instincts restrained him from closing it summarily in the face of the intruder, who in the interval of time thus afforded managed to insinuate himself inside the hall.

"This concerns your immediate family. This evening's *Mercury* contains an exclusive account of Mr. Baxter Chippendale's marriage, together with the interesting item of the birth of a posthumous heir, a son—of which last fact you are possibly not cognizant, Mr. Chippendale."

He was a slim, hatchet-faced, rather seedy young man, with sharp eyes and a drooping mustache. The butler, who happened to be turning the lights on, advanced to receive his master's narrow-rimmed silk hat with an air as though he expected to be called on to interfere.

"A child was born last night, I am fully aware. What of it, sir?"

"In that case my mission is simply to ascertain the attitude of the family. The *Mercury* desires a statement of the affair from your point of view. There are two sides to every question of public interest."

In the face of this homily Mr. Chippendale acted like one hypnotized. Primarily, to discuss such a matter before his man-servant was out of the question. He had but to speak the word and the interloper would be denied a further audience—cast out bodily. At the same time he was vaguely sensitive to the thought that the press had certain rights which a progressive citizen could not afford to ignore utterly. He was conscious, too, of a certain morbid curiosity to examine the obnoxious journal which had been exhibited to him. In another moment, though he suspected himself to be a craven, he had led the way into the library and was confronting his visitor from the depths of an arm-chair with the tips of his fingers touching one

another. At least they were out of earshot of Miles the butler.

The reporter seemed to divine, partially at least, the working of Mr. Chippendale's mind; for without heeding the gesture of invitation to sit down he unfolded the newspaper and proceeded to force the contents of the front page directly on the attention of his host.

Mr. Chippendale received it mechanically and put on his eye-glasses. The reporter was pointing to huge capitals in the midst of which he discerned his brother's name. His head swam before the revolting headlines surrounded by hideous cuts which he recognized as family portraits—Baxter's, his son Chauncey's, his nephew Henry's, and the widow's. He read with growing horror the text setting forth the sensational tale with ghoulish extravagance. Nothing was suppressed and no one's sensibilities were spared. On the contrary the writer, indulging his imagination, had managed both to exult over the discomfiture of an aristocratic stock and at the same time weave a cheap romance for the benefit of the ignorant masses. Such was the sum of the impressions which Mr. Chippendale's outraged brain derived from the perusal of the sheet which he held in a hand trembling with indignation.

"And have you seen fit," he asked, "to invade my privacy in order to show me this disgusting screed?"

While Mr. Chippendale's eyes were on the newspaper his visitor reproduced the card which he promptly presented in response to these fiery but august words. As Mr. Chippendale ignored the outstretched hand, he laid it on a little table which held an electric lamp and stepped back. "These are my credentials. My name is Bliffel; on the staff of the *Mercury*."

"Are you responsible for this outrage?"

"It came to us from an authentic source," replied Mr. Bliffel, misinterpreting the inquiry. "We've the only evening paper which has it; so naturally we want to make hay while the sun shines."

"The private citizen in this country has absolutely no protection from disgusting notoriety." There was a sad dignity in the words which should have carried its own reproach. "I suppose, sir"—Mr. Chippendale picked up the card beside him—"Mr. Bliffel, I believe—that this is what is known as journalistic enterprise?"

Mr. Bliffel appeared to disregard the stately sarcasm as a symptom of a return to reason.

"We're no worse than the others," he responded with genial glibness. "The newspaper must live. Its business is to circulate news, not suppress it. The story is true, isn't it?"

"My brother left a widow, who was once his stenographer, if that's what you mean."

"Formerly in the employ of your nephew, Mr. Sumner, the late candidate for mayor on the Citizens' ticket. And there's a posthumous child—you admitted that." Standing on the hearth-rug with his hands in his side pockets and his legs apart, the visitor was obviously making a magnanimous endeavor to point out to his auditor that he had nothing to complain of. Did not this first citizen stand in need of enlightenment on the score of what every freeborn citizen of a democracy was expected to put up with? "That's all we've said," he continued, "though of course, we had to put it picturesquely. An octogenarian blue-blood marries his typewriter and her posthumous son becomes the heir to millions. Rather striking for conservative Boston. King Cophetua and the beggar maid are back numbers to the general public, but it'll want to read about this."

Mr. Chippendale groaned and made an impatient pass before his eyes as if he would obliterate from his memory the abhorrent headlines.

"And what I am applying to you for on behalf of the readers of the *Mercury*," persisted Mr. Bliffel, captivated by his own lucid reasonableness, "is to ascertain the attitude of your family on the subject. We have no axe to grind; it is our duty to be impartial. Perhaps you will be good enough to tell me," he added, adopting a business-like briskness, "whether you concede the legality of the marriage and the paternity of the child, or whether you and those you represent intend to put up a fight to retain your brother's millions."

There was a pause. Mr. Bliffel believed that he had convinced his hearer.

"I have called on my brother's widow and she has received me. My brother's child will inherit its share of my brother's property and presumably bear his name." The calmness with which Mr. Chippendale uttered these deliberate words resembled that which proceeds a storm, but Mr. Bliffel in his eagerness failed to detect this. The reporter whipped out a note-book and found a pencil behind his ear.

"Called on the lady? And when was that, if I may inquire, Mr. Chippendale?"

Mr. Chippendale rose in high dudgeon. He had been goaded to the point where his patience was exhausted. "This interview must cease," he said, with stately decision.

Mr. Bliffel, pencil in hand, stared.

"What's up?"

"You must go, sir."

"Turn me out? Just as we were getting on so finely? Just as we had reached the nub of the interview?" A wounded spirit who can bear? Mr. Bliffel was visibly hurt.

Mr. Chippendale waited, trusting that he would depart of his own accord and not oblige him to press the bell and summon Miles.

"What have I done to offend you?" the reporter inquired.

"To begin with, you forced your way into my house unbidden. That is an effrontery in itself according to civilized usages."

"Democratic usage sanctions it. A sensible man's house can't be his castle where the newspapers are concerned. The people demand the news."

"I waive that complaint. I am ready also to assume that democratic usage sanctions the printing and dissemination of the scandalous material contained in that newspaper. It appears to be so. Otherwise, why do such newspapers exist? But that's not the point."

"The *Mercury* is only stating the truth," retorted Mr. Bliffel doggedly. "Wait and see how the yellow journals treat you before you get your back up."

Mr. Chippendale paused again. The sequence of his thoughts had been interrupted. "The bare facts are mainly correct. The grossly sensational and offensive method in which they are presented, with rude cuts, and insulting, maudlin conclusions emanating from the brain of him who wrote it, constitutes a libel. But I repeat—that's not the point. I put up with all this. I listened to you and asked you to sit down. It's democratic usage, I dare say, to offer a reporter a cigar or a glass of wine; but I'm not progressive enough for that." Mr. Chippendale when roused could be vicious. He enjoyed the satiric thrust. It was a breach of hospitality; but such a chance to speak his complete mind would never be afforded him again. "But when, having wormed your way to an inter-

view," he continued, "you take it on yourself to indulge in foul insinuations regarding the legality of my brother's marriage and the paternity of his infant child, my forebearance ends. I——"

"The public wants to know how the family feels about the matter—what stand it's going to take," broke in the amazed reporter. "That's all."

"Don't interrupt me, sir." But the protest served slightly to deflect the current of Mr. Chippendale's tirade. "The family? Why should the family be dragged into it?"

"The report is in circulation that the heirs intend to fight, as I told you in the first place, but you wouldn't listen. I came here to-night to find out whether it was true or not, and I was just jotting down from your own lips that everything was harmonious and that there wouldn't be a row, when lo! behold, you invite me to get out. I'm not looking for cigars or bottles of wine, but it's fair to expect common-sense."

Mr. Bliffel thrust his note-book in his pocket, rammed his pencil behind his ear and buttoned his coat.

"It all comes to the same thing." Mr. Chippendale, who prided himself on being an eminently just man, felt a trifle confused. But he had no intention of letting the opportunity slip. "There's something you don't grasp—and I'd like to point it out to you. It seems to you incredible that a family shouldn't choose to drag its skirts in the gutter for the sake of dollars and cents; that it should hold its head too high to demean itself by washing its dirty linen in public, though ten millions were at stake instead of two, and no matter how convincing the proofs. It's an insult to ask such a family whether it is ready to foul its own nest by scrabbling for an inheritance. Do I make this

clear at last, sir?" Mr. Chippendale's lip trembled from the sincerity of his emotion.

Mr. Bliffel listened attentive but unmoved, with a slight sneer which his drooping mustache did not entirely conceal. Pricking up his affronted ears at the close he remarked:

"Then there's something behind the scenes, after all?"

Mr. Chippendale gazed at him a moment, comprehending slowly; then the enormity of the statement overcame him.

"Only an impertinent rascal, sir, would make such an inquiry after my direct assurance to the contrary."

"Go it," exclaimed Mr. Bliffel. "Don't mind me." He was pleased at keeping his own temper so admirably. "I should judge from the general flavor of your remarks that you are not much in sympathy with democratic institutions. You'd better go live in England, if you're not satisfied."

"My patriotism is not at issue. I was sufficiently proud of my country to risk my life for her at your age."

Mr. Chippendale, who took but a mild interest in the war with Spain, intended nothing sinister by this speech, but the reporter chose to regard it as a reflection on himself.

"I'm hoping for orders to go to the front any day," he answered, and then he lost what advantage he possessed by indulging in the hackneyed utterance, "Folks in your position don't seem to take into account that reporting is a business like any other business, and that a reporter has to live. He's a human being and liable to have a wife and children same as you are. We don't relish all our jobs; but if we were to handle them the way you kid-gloved gentry would have us, we'd be bounced before the first pay day."

The pathos of this appealed to Bliffel as unanswerable.

"Very possibly," said Mr. Chippendale dryly. He was not moved, for his mind was still occupied with the taunt that he had better live in England. He believed himself to be second to no citizen on the score of true patriotism; and as a part of that patriotism he reserved to himself the right to cavil at the shortcomings of his countrymen when they merited reproof. His ire was still rampant and he had only partially spoken his mind. The moment seemed ripe for this young man to hear before he departed home truths which no one else would be apt to tell him.

"You spoke of sympathy with democratic institutions. No one believes in public spirit more firmly than I do. I —the Chippendales for several generations—have ever been proud to foster and—er—make sacrifices in behalf of the best institutions of our native city and country. It is because I love them that I deplore the visible loosening of our moral ties, the degeneracy of our modern manners. We are fast ceasing to have either convictions or culture. You ask me why? Because our standards are being swept away one after another by an insidious undertow of flabby, easy-going optimism which would substitute mere opportunism for stable principle and haphazard social ease for reverence and high breeding. The newspaper? The modern newspaper is but a symbol. In the seventy years during which I have lived in Boston it has been transformed from a respectable medium of the political and commercial news into a daily eyesore. Yes, sir, an eyesore," Mr. Chippendale paused to press home the heartfelt indictment. Then to point his moral more completely he added: "And I pride myself—I have always prided myself on being a progressive man. No one has greater sympathy with genuine progress than I. The Chippen-

dales"—he stopped short—"I see, sir, you are amused at the idea."

Bliffel had been listening to the harangue with emotions akin to those of one caught in a pelting shower without an umbrella. Instead of turning up his collar he folded his arms and let it come down, waiting for an opening. After all, he reflected, there was something picturesque about the ancient aristocrat, venomous as he showed himself. There might be also a shade of truth in the charges, antediluvian as they sounded. The world certainly was becoming pretty easy-going; though doubtless this was in order that it might run faster and more smoothly. But the reference to progress was too much for his risibilities.

"To my benighted intelligence," he said in response to Mr. Chippendale's challenge, "it would seem about as rational to call the inmates of McLean Asylum yonder"—and he jerked his thumb over his shoulder to indicate the far distance across Charles River—"progressive." As a journalist and a loyal citizen of Boston he could not, however diverting the old gentleman's eloquence, suffer such wholesale calumny to pass without a fitting rebuke.

Mr. Chippendale flushed at the affront, then frowned. It was a matter of pride that none of his family had ever been an inmate of this institution. But it had been one of the secret dreads of his life that he might some day be put there. Was not insanity said to be on the increase, without distinction of person? The impertinent intimation that here was where he belonged put him on his dignity and reminded him that he had parleyed with this intruder long enough. He had freed his own mind and taught him his lesson, and it was time for the interview to close. He walked to the fireplace and pressed the button of the electric bell.

"It wasn't necessary to ring. I know my way out," exclaimed the reporter, prompt to recognize the hint. Then disappointed doubtless that his previous insinuation had not elicited a more striking display of wrath and desirous to have the last word, he added: "Progressive? If the fitting phrase were left to me, I'd say a mossback."

Mr. Chippendale stared haughtily. "I am not familiar with the expression," he said. Straightening his spare figure to its full height he pointed toward the door, which the next moment was opened from the outside, to admit not the man-servant, but his son Chauncey, who entering briskly, exclaimed: "I just looked in, father, to tell you—" Perceiving the reporter he halted. "Why, it's Mr. Bliffel. Then, of course, you've seen this already," he added, holding out to his father the newspaper which he had brought. "The fat's all in the fire."

Mr. Chippendale nodded. "I've seen it and have just declined to be interviewed by this—er—reporter."

Chauncey had no need of his father's doughty words in order to grasp the situation. "Mr. Bliffel and I are old acquaintances. He lets me in for an interview every now and then, and I'm bound to admit that he generally uses me pretty well." He wheeled upon the reporter with a propitiatory smile.

"And you'll give me credit, I believe, for getting out when I'm invited to?" answered Bliffel, grinning significantly.

"My father isn't accustomed to reporters. You should have come to see me. What can I do for you? Sit down, Mr. Bliffel. Miles," he added, turning to the butler who stood waiting in response to the bell which Mr. Chippendale had rung, "bring Mr. Bliffel a cigar." Thus by a happy display of genial tact Chauncey soothed the feelings

of the visitor and at the same time put him slightly on the defensive.

"I was down this way, and I thought a few words from the older generation——"

"You can't blame a man of my father's years for objecting to notoriety. This article"—Chauncey held up the obnoxious newspaper—"is necessarily distasteful to all of us."

"I didn't write it."

"And the *Mercury* had to print it. It's business. I understand that. But you couldn't expect a member of the family who didn't know you to receive you with open arms. How did the *Mercury* get wind of this?"

"I'm not at liberty to disclose," said Mr. Bliffel puffing at the cigar provided him by Miles. "Mr. Harrison Chippendale has already stated that you do not dispute the facts."

"How could we? My uncle did marry his stenographer and has left a child born yesterday. Consequently his previous will is of no effect."

Chauncey spoke with business-like suavity. He, too, had lighted a cigar. Every one was seated and Mr. Bliffel had reproduced his note-book. Mr. Chippendale listening in his easy-chair, with the tips of his fingers touching one another, felt a little crestfallen. Possibly he had been somewhat peppery. The ways of the younger generation were invariably past understanding; but this object-lesson was interesting. Save for the cigar, Chauncey had not placed him in a false position; on the contrary, had virtually defended him. Yet he seemed to be getting on with the fellow—to understand how to handle him. Apparently, though, a private citizen's house had ceased to be his castle where the newspaper press was concerned. To

protect one's self and curry favor it was necessary to be obsequious to individuals one would enjoy throwing into Charles River. Yet his son was one of the leading bankers of Boston, accustomed to consideration and to impose his will on others. Thus musing, Mr. Chippendale heard Chauncey continue:

"The local color is lurid and the pictures superfluously grotesque from a Back Bay standpoint; but we're not in a position to deny anything. The essential statements are correct. What we wish now is to be let down as gently as possible."

Bliffel nodded. "It's merely the attitude of the family I'm after," he said deprecatingly. When one of the magnates of State Street showed himself capable of recognizing that a reporter was also a man and a brother, he was glad to be accommodating. "The *Mercury* would like to know if there is to be litigation. Will there be a contest regarding either the child or the money?"

"None whatever. Nothing of the sort," replied Chauncey with emphasis. "There's not a particle of discord on either side. You may say, on the contrary, that the attitude of the family toward the widow and her son is absolutely cordial, and that there is no possibility of litigation. Get that straight, Mr. Bliffel."

The reporter scribbled away with manifest satisfaction. What a contrast, he reflected, to the crusty progenitor in the arm-chair, whom it was a pleasure to have witness the method in which two modern men of affairs conducted business. Pencil in air, he looked up to add with a shade of exultation, "And Mr. Harrison Chippendale has called upon the widow to acknowledge her as his brother's wife."

"My father told you that, did he? I don't see but you pumped him, after all."

Bliffel grinned. "It was like extracting teeth, though," he answered by way of a parting shot at Mr. Chippendale. He closed his note-book and rose, for his stay had been far longer than he intended. But he had got what he came for. "I'm much obliged to you, sir," he said with a bow at Chauncey.

Mr. Chippendale, convinced that reverence had vanished from the world, gripped the arms of his chair and quivered in silence. But Chauncey, stepping forward, said, in his most engaging confidential manner, though not without dignity: "Now I rely on you, Bliffel, to treat us decently, and tone down everything as much as possible. You must appreciate that to a family like ours this notoriety is horribly distasteful. It galls my father—it galls me. We're up against it; but you can help us, though. We don't want any more publicity than is absolutely necessary and we don't want to be misrepresented. And fix the other newspapers, like a good fellow, so that they won't indulge in offensive personalities or sensational flights of the imagination."

"You may rely on me, sir, I'll make it a personal matter. I'll see that no mistake is made as to how the family stands on the main question, and I'll ask the editor to blue pencil anything you wouldn't like."

Mr. Chippendale, who had risen as an habitual act of courtesy to speed his sparting guest, gathered that the latter was decidedly flattered by his son's condescension. It appeared to be necessary, however, for Chauncey to escort him to the library door and, having shaken hands with him, to volunteer—did his own ears hear correctly?—satisfaction that he had called. Nevertheless, the moment Mr. Bliffel had left the room Mr. Chippendale beheld his son drop on the sofa with a sigh and, supporting his cheeks on

his hands, stare moodily at the fireplace until they heard the door slam, when he indulged in this soliloquy:

"What else can one do with a beggar like that but treat him civilly? He's bound to print something; that's what he's paid for. If one is peevish, he slangs you and nothing is gained. But it's rather trying to have to play the sunshiny host to a fellow whom you are itching to throw out of the window."

This pseudo-justification resembled so closely an apology that Mr. Chippendale was encouraged to remark: "He waylaid me at the foot of the front door steps or he would never have got in. I mistook him for a needy tramp."

Chauncey sighed again. "Bliffel is better than most of them. He's a white man according to his lights. If you refuse to talk, he's liable at a pinch to invent an interview; but if you treat him civilly and he gives you his word not to roast you, I've never known him to break it. So it pays not to be ugly to him."

Having uttered these words of opportunist wisdom, Chauncey happened to notice the copy of the *Mercury* which had slipped to the floor beside his father's chair. Stooping, he was in the act of consigning this to the flames of the wood fire when Mr. Chippendale exclaimed just in time to stay his hand, "What are you doing, Chauncey?"

"I was going to destroy this filthy lucubration. I didn't suppose you would care to have it about."

"You had better save it for the moment. Your mother might like to see it," faltered the old gentleman.

Chauncey laughed. "All right," he said, and nodding in the direction of the library table on which he had laid his own copy, added: "I'm taking mine home to Beatrice for the same reason." He spread out the newspaper in his hands and scrutinized the contents for a moment ruefully.

"It's about the limit of indecent journalism," he remarked. "But one bright spot, father, is they didn't print your picture."

"No, they spared me that indignity." Then after a moment he asked: "What is a—er—mossback, Chauncey?"

"A mossback?" Chauncey chuckled respectfully. "It's vernacular, I believe, for any one on whom the moss of ages is supposed to have accumulated. A person," he continued, observing that his father still looked puzzled, "who has lived a long time and cherishes fixed opinions. Why do you ask? Did Bliffel call you one?"

"Yes. Only a moment before you came in."

"The impudent villain. I wish I'd overheard him. It's invidious, however, not strictly opprobrious."

"I see. Behind the times. An old fogy. A back number, I think you would call it," Mr. Chippendale added complacently by way of showing that his phraseology was not altogether archaic. "Well, I suppose I am—at my age. I'm glad to be if the contrary means refusing to stand up for one's principles," he remarked stoutly.

"You're all right, father. I wish there were more men nowadays like you. We're all so infernally afraid of giving offence." Chauncey sat down on the sofa again and relapsed into his former attitude of staring moodily at the fire. It was obvious from his expression that he was out of sorts. "It's been a gruesome day down-town," he resumed. "The bottom has been dropping out of everything I own. Electric Coke has been the weakest thing on the list. It fell twenty points on top of twenty yesterday; nearly two hundred off from its highest of three months ago. It's cheap—dirt cheap, if I had only had the spare cash. If only I were flush, I'd make the people who are marking it down very tired. But this surprise party of

Uncle Baxter's has tied me up tighter than a drum." These remarks in the nature of a soliloquy would explain the absence of his customary flow of spirits and also give an inkling to his father that his affairs were not so rosy as they appeared.

Mr. Chippendale showed himself becomingly sympathetic. "One of the most unfortunate features of the whole episode has been your legitimate disappointment."

"I suppose on general principles it's a good rule not to invest a legacy until it's in the box."

Mr. Chippendale did not gainsay this conservative proposition. After musing a moment Chauncey continued: "I wonder if it could have been Blaisdell who gave away Uncle Baxter's marriage to the *Mercury*."

"After dining at my house, I can scarcely believe it."

"He's at the bottom of most things nowadays," responded Chauncey gloomily. "Though when one tries to prove it, it's next to impossible to put one's finger on him."

Miles appeared at this moment with a note on a silver salver which he presented to his master, saying that the messenger was from Miss Chippendale's.

Opening the missive Mr. Chippendale read and uttered an exclamation of alarm. "It's from the nurse. Mary Higgins" (naming the old house-keeper) "asked her to write. Georgiana is much worse. The doctor fears it may be apoplexy." Mr. Chippendale sat like one stunned. "And when I left your aunt not more than an hour ago, we thought her decidedly better."

It was one of Chauncey's regrets for the rest of his days that, in spite of this distressing news, the thought stole unbidden into his mind that the requisite money might be forthcoming in the nick of time. Thus do the necessities of those who stand at bay in the world struggle for great

possessions, obtrude their sordid claims at the most solemn moments of life. Simultaneously he heard his father exclaim piteously with trembling lip which he sought to keep firm, "Chauncey, my boy, it looks as if the elder generation were breaking up."

Falling on his knees in an access of filial tenderness, Chauncey put his arm around Mr. Chippendale's shoulder. Though he was in the strength of his manhood, his warm heart responded to the poignancy of the cry—the cry of age deploring that the silver cord must soon be broken. "My dear old father," he said, "I'm terribly sorry for you."

CHAPTER XXVII

Miss Georgiana Chippendale died that night. She never regained consciousness and passed away in the small hours. The sight of crape on the shining metal bell-handle of the old-fashioned white door caused grief to many hearts. She had been eminently a public-spirited woman—this was what every one said of her—of a kind peculiar in a sense to Boston. One whose concern in rectifying wrongs and promoting every sort of human progress was so intense that her sympathies were easily aroused. She gave freely both of her time and her money; gave with loyal zeal which never wavered, but burned brightly until superseded by a fresh enthusiasm. Some of these enthusiasms were fads; so rapidly did they succeed one another, they needs must be so. But as the *Transcript* (the columns of which she perused every evening of her mature life) justly stated in a brief editorial on the day of her funeral, she had by virtue of her high aspirations,

receptibility to new ideas and tireless energy made herself a moral force in Boston which would be widely missed.

Her many annual benefactions embraced numerous minor as well as major charities. Who exactly would take her place? Give, that is, with so liberal and unexacting a hand? Once a subscriber, Miss Chippendale always remained one. In the face of her life devoted so largely to the public welfare, her peculiarities and eccentricities dwindled into insignificance from the obituary standpoint. But after she was laid to rest, there was general curiosity as to what she had done with her money. It was surmised that she was very wealthy, though few were privy to her talent for speculation. Just as Boston was in the throes of surprise and interrogation over Baxter's secret marriage and the disinheritance of his nephews and nieces, every one paused to wonder as to the terms of Miss Georgiana's will and how much she had left. Were the family her principal beneficiaries, or had she made her nephews and nieces modest bequests and enriched her favorite charities?

A new sensation was in store for the community. The instrument, executed about a year before her death, disclosed a vigorous purpose. To all her incorporated hobbies the testatrix bequeathed sums within a range from five hundred to ten thousand dollars. The annual income from five thousand was appropriated for the housing of the squirrels and the protection of the birds on the Common. Her coachman and maids were given pensions and a few aged contemporaries suitable pecuniary remembrances. Her personal effects were apportioned with careful detail. For example, to her niece and namesake was bequeathed her jewelry, all of which proved to be old-fashioned; to her friend and former companion, Priscilla Avery, was left

the gilt clock and two bronze figures which had graced immemorially the mantel-piece in the drawing-room. To her seven nephews and nieces living at her death the sum of one hundred thousand dollars apiece was given, but in trust without power of anticipation and free from the control of any wife or husband. All the rest and residue of her property—and here was the feature which made Boston marvel and set tongues wagging—was devised to her dear nephew, Henry Chippendale Sumner—but on one condition, that he change his surname to Chippendale. Otherwise the residue was to be divided equally between Harvard College, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Why had Miss Chippendale preferred this special nephew and, having preferred him, inserted this remarkable proviso? What was the amount of the residue and would the chief beneficiary fulfil the condition? Such were the questions which rose at once to many lips. Ready answers were forthcoming for all but one of them. It was a peculiar will; but Miss Chippendale was a peculiar woman; a woman of intense likes and dislikes. Her nephew Henry had of late years been her favorite. She was proud of his stern, uncompromising morality and public-spirited proclivities, qualities which she associated with the Chippendales and which he alone of the younger generation appeared to her to possess. He was a Chippendale by blood and poor as a church mouse. She would make him one by name and rich as well. She had left her other nephews and nieces competences—as much as was good for them; this was doubtless the way she justified herself. She was of the kind who, when strongly possessed by an idea, are able to arrive at justice to their own satisfaction. Henry Sumner would be true to the

ideals for which the Chippendale family had invariably stood; and the Chippendales had always been wealthy to boot.

Such was the reasoning of Boston. Mark, too, it continued, the shrewd way by which the testatrix had made it impossible for Henry generously to renounce the magnificent gift, and by so doing, divide the residue share and share alike with his sisters and cousins. If he refused to change his name, the fortune would all go to noble benevolent uses outside the family. To put them all on the same footing was manifestly impossible. A less scrupulous person might change his name and, having secured the money, make a division; but it could be taken for granted that a rigorous soul like Henry Sumner would feel in honor bound not to whip the devil round the stump. As for the amount, Miss Chippendale's lawyer, who drew the will and was familiar with her affairs, had expressed the opinion that the residue would foot up certainly half a million. Henry was quixotic by nature; but seeing that he could not benefit his kinsfolk by refusal, what else was there to do but place the injustice, if any, on the shoulders of his aunt where it belonged and submit to her strange caprice. She evidently cherished a deep sentiment for the name; so much so, as some one declared, that she had clung to it herself so long as she could and then claimed the right to select a worthy successor. In short, she had made him her son by adoption to the tune of five hundred thousand dollars.

At the close of the reading of the document in Miss Georgiana's drawing-room by Mr. Saunders, the lawyer, one could have heard a pin drop. The purport was so astounding that Harrison Chippendale, in common with Mrs. Sumner and all the other feminine members of the

family, were unable to take it in. Mr. Chippendale broke the awkward silence to request that the residuary clauses be read a second time. The only ones who really comprehended were Henry and Chauncey; but the former was struck dumb by bewilderment, the latter by unpleasant realization that fate had dealt him another blow between the eyes. All he would receive was a paltry hundred thousand; and what was this out of what he guessed to be at least two millions? There was a ripple of astonishment. Again it was Mr. Chippendale who spoke.

"Your aunt appears to have left you the lion's share, Henry, my boy."

"It's simply amazing; the greatest possible surprise to me, Harrison. I hadn't the remotest conception that Georgiana was contemplating anything of the sort," murmured Mrs. Sumner in a flutter of solicitude.

"She has always approved of Henry," declared her brother unflinchingly in an effort to elucidate the conduct of the deceased.

"But of course I couldn't accept it." The words were Henry's. All eyes had been covertly resting on him, and every ear had been waiting to hear what he would say. Though he had kept silent for a moment, as if battling with himself, the speech was unhesitatingly explicit.

"Of course not," echoed his mother with an exalted sigh of relief. "You might be sure that Henry would feel that he must be generous; that he could not afford to better himself at the expense of his sisters and cousins."

"But as I understand the will, generosity wouldn't do the rest of us the least good," interposed Chauncey. "If Henry refuses the money, it goes to Harvard College, the Art Museum and the Animals."

"That's it," explained Mr. Saunders laconically. "As

I figure the estate, the residue will probably slightly exceed six hundred thousand dollars."

"A lot of money. Bless me, I had no idea that Georgiana had been able to—er—accumulate so much," Mr. Chippendale could not refrain from remarking.

Chauncey's clear-headed criticism had put a damper on the equitable solution hinted at.

"The matter isn't so simple as I thought," murmured Mrs. Sumner.

"Of course the money must not go out of the family, whatever happens. Since it was Georgiana's wish that Henry should inherit the lion's share, I don't see but he must keep it," said Harrison.

"But you don't seem to understand. I can't accept because of the condition. I would not be willing to change my name," said Henry with unequivocal clearness. "It was my father's name."

There was another pause of general surprise.

"Your father's name. That's a different question," observed Mr. Chippendale.

Mrs. Sumner flushed from guilty consciousness of a moral lapse. Why had not this occurred to her as one of the crucial difficulties? She had heard the proviso distinctly enough—change his surname; but somehow the glamour of coming into all this money had obscured every other obstacle save the necessity of treating the rest of the family fairly. A Chippendale herself before marriage, the enormity of changing to one in name had not dawned on her at first; but she now perceived with agitation the genuineness of the problem confronting her son and how great was her own responsibility. For the sake of her girls —for the sake of the family fortunes, she must not let Henry be led away by a too fine-spun sophistry—if this were one;

on the other hand, it was imperative that she should not stand in the way of his remaining true to his best self and to Chippendale and Sumner traditions. Against the alternative of the loss of a great sum of money in an age of the world when money was, perhaps, as never before, serviceable to family advancement, stood the danger of disregarding that spiritual vision which was the most precious asset the family possessed.

"I had not considered that phase of the matter," she said earnestly, approaching Henry. "It will be best, dear, to decide on nothing hastily."

"But, mother, I could never look my father's portrait in the face again. His name is my name. How could I give it up? No amount of reflection could alter my opinion as to that."

Eleanor Sumner quailed before his relentless certainty. "Very possibly. But there are practical considerations which should be talked over—weighed. All I urge is that it is not requisite to decide to-day. It is your aunt's expressed wish, and it is not as if you were not already half a Chippendale."

"But my name is Sumner. I'm surprised, mother, that you should countenance the idea for an instant." Henry spoke proudly—a little theatrically, as if proclaiming that the unexpected opposition had constituted him the sole protector of his father's lineage.

"Doubtless you are right." She despised herself for insisting. But part of Henry's obstinacy had been inherited from her. "I am not sure this is not a case where, if your father were alive, he would feel that you owed it to yourself—to us all to make the change."

"But he is not alive. And I do not believe he would."

Though conscious that she had been overruled, Mrs.

Sumner thrilled with maternal pride. She had done her duty; pointed out and smoothed the easier path so that he might avail himself of it if he would. He had chosen instead that of filial sentiment and loyal family honor. What should she in her heart but exult? He had simply been true to the fearless vision of his ancestors.

But Harrison Chippendale was not so easily convinced. "Your sentiment for your father's name is highly praiseworthy. But is not what you propose a little quixotic? You have a leaning that way at times, if you will pardon my saying so, Henry. I reverence sentiment deeply. But is the course you have in mind wholly practical? Take your mother's advice and think it over. It is no small consideration that over half a million dollars of Chippendale money will, if you persist, pass out of the family."

Henry gazed back at the group of near relatives, his sisters, aunt and cousins, and realized that this plea gauged more or less accurately the family opinion. Obviously they had their doubts. His sister, Mrs. Paton, looked troubled. Apparently she was susceptible, as a rising professor's wife, to the social value of so large a fortune. Even in Lily's eyes he did not find that animating gleam which would indicate complete approval. Was she inviting him in the name of Christian Science to maintain a sweet reasonableness? All this he discerned in a flash, and then suddenly he felt the pressure of his mother's hand on his own in sign of her capitulation. Not for an instant had he faltered; but this cleared his spirit's horizon of its only worry.

"Yes, I am quixotic at times, Uncle Harrison. Some people will think me so in this case. But that is the way I am constituted. I could never forgive myself for doing otherwise. As for the money—you must lay the responsibility on Aunt Georgiana if it passes out of the family."

"Keep your father's name and give up six hundred thousand dollars! That's living up to one's principles with a vengeance! I don't claim I'd do it—proud as I am of the name which belongs to me; but I take my hat off to the man who is capable of it. I'll say this for you, Henry, you're a thoroughbred in your own way."

The encomium was from Chauncey. He had been moved to speak out of the fulness of his heart. Depressed by this new freak of destiny, his aunt's favoritism, he had taken no part in the conversation since the moment when he had pricked the bubble of premature generosity. As he listened, gloomy dismay had given place to incredulous astonishment and this at last to a sudden wave of enthusiasm for the cousin whom he had long secretly despised. It was such a simple matter to change one's name; such excellent arguments existed for doing so; yet here was a kinsman ready to turn his back deliberately on more than half a million out of sheer family pride and devotion to his father's memory. "Magnificent, but it is not war," he reflected, enjoying the quotation. But his lips for the first time in his life spontaneously paid a fervid tribute of admiration to his cousin's sincerity. Though slightly condescending still, the words were clearly an admission that he had never done his qualities justice and was eager to make amends.

As such they were gratefully received by Henry. Resolute as he could be when they differed, in the presence of Chauncey he was still humble at heart as in their college days and was painfully conscious of his own deficiencies. His cousin was such an aristocratic, tactful fellow, with such engaging manners and such a happy faculty for getting on with people. Even at this proud moment his reply proved half apologetic:

"I can't help seeing it that way," he said with a quizzical smile which lighted up his lean countenance. "It's the nature of the beast, I suppose; I'm made so. Other people might see no wrong in it. And I'm disappointed, too, Chauncey," he added, "that there doesn't appear to be any method by which you and the others could have the money instead of me." Then, as he paused, he suddenly continued like one making a confession, "And you mustn't think that I wouldn't be glad to have it myself. I've learned to appreciate the value of a lot of money and how much more a man may accomplish if he is rich."

This counter admission prompted Mrs. Harrison Chippendale to remark: "Don't you think it would be wise, Henry, before you definitely refuse, to consult some thorough-going, responsible business man as to what is really right under all the circumstances? You see how your uncle and Chauncey feel on the subject; they admire your filial sentiment, but they question the necessity. Since, as you agree, money *is* such a power, will you put it beyond your reach and the reach of all of us without first testing your opinion by the judgment of some modern men of affairs?"

Margaret Chippendale had the reputation in the family of being sagacious in spite of her social narrowness. It had offended her that Henry should be preferred to her own children, and she would have welcomed any loophole by which the disparity between them might be counteracted. But all the business instincts of the Floyds caused her to shudder at such financial suicide. Hence her attempt to provide a rational antidote, which sounded so plausible that it inspired her youngest daughter to supplement it by the inquiry:

"What would Mr. Blaisdell do under similar circum-

stances, I wonder. Why wouldn't he be a good person to consult?"

There was no malice in Georgiana's speech. It never occurred to her that she was waving a red rag in her cousin's face. On the contrary, she was entirely sincere in her desire to know what view such a leading citizen would take of the matter. Mr. Saunders, the lawyer, had departed some minutes before, leaving the family to its own devices. But whatever Henry's emotions, he was spared the necessity of protest by Chauncey's instantaneous retort:

"Blaisdell? Can any one doubt what Blaisdell would say or do? He would regard any man who let six hundred thousand dollars slip through his fingers rather than change his name as fit only for McLean Asylum."

"Chauncey—Chauncey," murmured his father, shrinking at the final allusion. "It isn't necessary to be so extravagant."

But Chauncey's ears were closed. His sister's words had produced a peculiar effect on him. "And the very certainty that he would take just that stand and stigmatize any other as a lack of common-sense," he continued, speaking with obvious feeling, and looking around the circle as if to emphasize his statement, "is a strong argument with me for sympathizing with Henry. "

"But everybody agrees that Mr. Blaisdell is a very able man and that his opinion carries weight in the community," Georgiana responded dauntlessly. Time had slightly amplified this young lady's figure, but without impairing her beauty or air of breeding. The grace of her well-poised bird-like head, and the allurement of her soft eyes still distinguished her in any drawing-room, though maturity had conventionalized her voice and manner to a point where the desire for elegance imposed a constant check on spon-

taneity. But she relaxed in the presence of her family, who also recognized that beneath her social reserve she nursed a tendency to know queer people and advocate startling doctrines. Had she inherited her father's progressiveness? Such was her mother's inner plaint when she sought to fathom why the only beauty of her three unmarried daughters still hung fire matrimonially. And voluntarily so, for Georgiana had received several satisfactory offers. A brilliant match was desirable and her due, but a girl might shake her head too often at the gift-horse opportunity. Meanwhile, as her sagacious mother reflected, the feminine heart grew less susceptible to illusion. Mrs. Chippendale felt that she had a right in the face of these conditions to harbor despondency.

"Able? No one denies his ability. Give him time and he can prove to any one conclusively that black is white." So answered Chauncey, and then added this unbrotherly taunt, "We all know how thoroughly he has hypnotized you, Georgy."

His sister coolly showed no umbrage. "I like him, of course I like him. He always has something interesting to say. We asked him to dinner, and I'm glad of it, for I was tired of dining with just the same people all the year round. The real reason you don't fancy him, Chauncey, is that he's so clever down-town. You wish to be the head of everything—and he won't let you. But Boston is a large city now and there's room for divided authority on State Street."

"No, he won't let me; you're right there." Chauncey indulged in a wry smile at this bitter truth proceeding from such a naïve authority. He was highly amused both by his sister's radical outlook and by her perspicacity. "It's partly envy on my side, Georgy, I admit," he continued

mirthfully. "But it isn't all envy. Ask Henry what he thinks of Blaisdell. You can't accuse him of being envious."

"I'm not so sure about that," she replied instantly with a saucy glance at her cousin. Georgiana was both aware of Henry's antipathy and confident that she knew its cause.

Chauncey stared a moment. "Oh, I forgot," he said with a laugh. "It appears then that neither of us is a dispassionate critic. Which only proves how difficult it is to corner Blaisdell. He invariably comes up smiling, or proves an alibi."

The fervor of this dialogue frustrated Mrs. Harrison Chippendale's attempt at mediation. Though nothing further was said the family parted, realizing that Henry's decision was unalterable. He himself—for his mother and sisters drove—walked down Beacon Street alone, dwelling, not on his refusal, but on the references to Blaisdell which it had called forth. It was obvious what Chauncey thought of that successful individual. By separate mental processes Chauncey had arrived at the same unflattering estimate as his own. The discovery was an agreeable surprise, nor was its value materially lessened by Georgiana's insinuation of rivalry down-town. He felt himself nearer to Chauncey than ever before in their lives. But the latter's final statement in response to Georgiana's championship was what chiefly possessed him as he walked along—that it was impossible to corner Blaisdell. Chauncey had discovered this, too; or, rather, Chauncey's discovery invoked the question whether he himself had made the slightest progress in fulfilling his own pledge. On what could he put his finger and say, "here is something definite of which I accuse you." Verily his cousin's epigram that Blaisdell

always came up smiling or proved an alibi seemed mournfully true. As Georgiana herself declared, Blaisdell was rated an interesting personage; his opinion carried weight in the community. What better indication of this than his hypnotism of her, by virtue of which he had won the social preferment of a seat at the fastidious Harrison Chippendale's dinner-table? Straws these, but straws which indicated how the wind on the Back Bay was blowing.

It was a perverse thought that he had so far proved nothing; Henry was conscious of this as he pursued his way, but his mood encouraged it. Georgiana's hint at prejudice stuck fast in his memory, too, and demanded a reckoning. Had his love made him intolerant and lacking in justice? Often enough previously he had asked himself the same question and received glowing assurance to the contrary. But now the sudden contact of Georgiana's jibe with Chauncey's epigram had set him thinking. He had pledged himself to produce convincing evidences of his rival's lack of moral fibre, and he had not one shred of definite testimony in support of his boast. He had asked for time, and ample time had been allowed him; yet he was no nearer the visible proofs than the day when he had spoken.

What did this demand? A frank acknowledgment. Henry was fairly revelling in his own perversity. It had begun to drizzle, and the pavements after twenty-four hours of soft weather, which had extracted the last remnants of winter from the soil, wore an ample covering of liquid mud. He managed in crossing to the Public Garden to smear one of his boots conspicuously. How like himself, he reflected, to do this just when he had decided to pay a call! If he expected others to condone his lack of social grace, his habitual self-consciousness, his uncompromising

prig-like rectitude and all his other faults, why should he not make allowances for Blaisdell? Had not Priscilla always maintained that they were simply different—each with redeeming qualities, and antagonistic merely because he insisted on it? Blaisdell from the first had been eager to sink their differences and shake hands. But he had held out obstinately; from righteousness he believed; or was it from jealousy?

Henry had never felt so humble in his life. It was as though a new window had been opened in his soul. Was he not self-convicted of jealousy? The refusal of his aunt's fortune had suddenly become a speck beside the need of bearing testimony that he was no longer at least so narrow-minded as he had professed. But the incident provided the latest instance by which to test his guilt. Not for a moment had he doubted as to the course which he should pursue; his duty still seemed clear as daylight. And Chauncey was correct—Blaisdell would condemn his conduct as Utopian. Sheer common-sense forbade that money should be put beyond one's grasp save for a tangible reason. He could almost hear him say it. Rank materialism in his own eyes; but the point was, there remained room for a difference of opinion. Had not his own family questioned the wisdom of his decision? Even his spiritually exacting mother for a moment doubted?

It was plain now. He had exaggerated everything from the first and seen through the lenses of jealousy. It behooved him to make amends. Thus rejoicing in his perversity, Henry, who had reached the head of Commonwealth Avenue, paused suddenly in his onward stride. Reviewing the furrowed relations between himself and Blaisdell with an eye to future amity, he had recoiled involuntarily before the prospect and found himself in the

grip of an unmistakable aversion which turned a deaf ear to reason. But that which made him halt—halt as before treasure trove—was the exultant thought which sprang from this: Why did he hate so relentlessly? Because he loved so much. Since this was true—and it was desperately true—there was this great comfort in it: He was at least a human lover and no longer the abstraction of one; he had ceased to be the high priest of ethics wooing on behalf of a frosty principle; he detested Blaisdell because he was his deadly rival. This self-knowledge should be his consolation while he promptly paid the penalty of his former blindness.

When having sped down the avenue through the drizzle, he reached Mr. Avery's house, Henry, in his eagerness to confess, stubbed his toes against the lower step which sobered him, for it recalled his damaged boot. Happily Priscilla was at home. He would have chafed at postponement. She sailed into the drawing-room with a radiant welcome which confused him by its cordiality. To his sensitive appreciation it seemed almost as if she were tendering wordless congratulations. There was a sparkle in her eyes which would have rewarded a volunteer in the current war, but she had already sanctioned his remaining at home. There was something in her manner which ignored his sable garments. Certainly she had been much more propitious since that interview in Park Street when the family catastrophe had transpired. The succeeding weeks had been crowded with events—the publicity of his uncle's marriage, the breaking out of the war, and finally his aunt's death. They had both been very busy, but he had gathered from their occasional meetings that she thought better of him than before that last passage at arms with Blaisdell. But she had never greeted him so unre-

servedly as this. What was it she was longing to tell him? Ostensibly he had come to thank her for her note of condolence on his aunt's death. There was a reminder to her in his black gloves, one of which he had on; the other he had squeezed nearly into a ball in the process of proving himself culpably but gloriously jealous. He begrudged the eclipse of that radiantly wistful expression; but he must needs express his gratitude.

"I came to thank you for your note."

The eclipse followed. "Dear Miss Georgiana! You will miss her immensely. She took so deep an interest in everything you did; was so proud of you. I was very fond of her, too."

"She has left you a remembrance. I have just come from hearing her will read."

The radiant expression returned, a little subdued by the proprieties, but eager. "Is it true?" she asked.

"True?"

"That she has made you her residuary legatee? Left you the larger portion of her property?"

"How do you happen to know?" Henry felt impelled to inquire.

"My brother-in-law told me this morning that he had heard it; and that your aunt was very rich; and naturally I was interested."

"Blaisdell? I might have guessed. He seems to get first news of everything."

"Very likely. But no matter about him. I am hoping for your sake——"

"It is upon a condition—which I have refused. I must give up my father's name; change it to Chippendale."

Priscilla gasped with astonishment. "Change your name?"

"Otherwise the residue goes to charity."

"I see. And you say you have refused?"

"Yes."

She sat back speechless. Involuntarily she glanced around the splendid room, as if measuring the sacrifice of six hundred thousand dollars. "What an eccentric provision!"

"Aunt Georgiana was an eccentric woman." Henry had fathomed Priscilla's mercenary glance. "There are some people who will think my refusal eccentric."

She nodded acquiescence, but a soft light shone in her eyes which he failed to detect.

"You must remember," he continued, "that I adore my father's memory. Worship the very ground he trod on."

"Are you apologizing to me for your decision?"

"I believed you would understand. I am sure you do—even if you cannot agree with me. Your brother-in-law, for instance, will think I'm crazy."

"Why do you persist in dragging in my brother-in-law?"

"Because I came also to talk about him." Henry had found his opportunity for confession. "I felt certain you would understand and that he would not. You mustn't think I do not realize what half a million signifies and what an aid it would be to any one's life. There are two sides to the question and you—you are broad-minded enough to comprehend my side no less than the other. There are two sides to this as there are two sides to most questions. I am apt to see only one; I fear I see only one still." He paused a moment then continued abruptly: "You will remember that I asked time to prove that your brother-in-law is a demoralizing influence in the community."

"More than three years ago," she answered with the

promptness of one who has kept close tally in expectation of a reckoning day.

"I have had ample time, but I am unable to produce the proofs. I can point to nothing definite in support of what I charged. So—er—in justice to him, I have come to tell you so."

"You mean that you have altered your estimate of Hugh Blaisdell?"

"I did not say that." He paused a moment, then resumed, throwing up his head, "In a measure, yes. For if I lack the proofs, does it not follow that I must be prejudiced?"

Instead of answering the question she let fall her eyes, realizing that he would go on. "I have not been wholly just to him," he said. "We are the antipodes of one another—you always told me that. The very fact that we were so different—saw everything from diametrically opposite poles, ought to have put me on my guard to make the most of his good qualities—and they are conspicuous—rather than dwell on and emphasize his defects. I owe it to you to admit that I have from the first pursued the illiberal policy and shut my eyes to his merits. My limitations were to blame; but that does not excuse me."

"When did you discover this?" Priscilla asked gently.

He could not see her expression for her face was lowered. Her eyes were fixed on the carpet directly in the line of his muddy boot which, with a self-conscious fidget, he endeavored to shield behind its mate. "I should have recognized it long ago. I never did with full force until to-day."

"To-day?" she echoed.

"This afternoon when, although it was so clear to me that I could not accept my aunt's fortune, the contrary view appealed to others—and some one said, 'Blaisdell

carries weight in the community and he would be sure to accept.'"

"Yes, Hugh would accept. There is not the smallest doubt of that." Her speech resembled a monologue. To Henry's ears it sounded as a Greek chorus to his self-abasement.

"I said to myself that he did carry weight in the community; was looked up to with admiration even by some of my own relatives. Then I remembered that I was not able to furnish a single concrete proof in support of my charges, and—and I saw that I had been narrow and unjust."

"Then you can be friends after all." Priscilla's head was still lowered. Her voice might have been that of the priestess at a sacrifice.

"Friends?"

The revolt in his voice caused her to look up.

"Blaisdell and I can never be friends," he continued, regarding her steadily and speaking with an intensity which he made no effort to control. "We are completely uncongenial. In spite of all I have said he remains repugnant to me. I dislike him greatly." Then as he saw the color rise to her cheeks in response to this animosity, he added: "It may pain you to hear this, but you should be able to guess the reason."

He rose to go, but her demeanor baffled him. At least she was not indignant. Her lovely eyes were sparkling with a refulgence which almost suggested merriment. But Henry was bent on drinking the cup of humiliation to the dregs. "I have failed to keep my compact with you—to bring you the promised proofs; and so you are justified in despising me. May I add that you have been very forebearing with me?" He bowed and turned to depart.

"Don't go," she said sweetly.

Starting he faced her.

"I found the proofs long ago. Do you think that I don't know by this time what Hugh is—do you think that I don't know what you are? Do you believe me still so blind, Henry?"

For an instant he stood dumfounded.

"Found the proofs long ago?" he echoed. But what other interpretation could be put on her words than their literal meaning? More glorious still, she had called him by his Christian name. Standing there with glowing cheeks and parted lips, more beautiful and winsome than he had ever beheld her, why did she look at him so strangely? Was she mocking him, or could it be that Morgan's prophecy had come true and that she was ready to fall into his arms with a dull, sickening thud? The whimsical phrase floated across his swimming brain; springing forward he clasped Priscilla to his breast just in time, for as she laid her head upon his shoulder she cried:

"Were you going to oblige me to offer myself to you, Henry?"

"Dull, consistent idiot that I was," he began, but she stopped his mouth with a kiss.

"Yes, I know," she said. "You are a typical Boston man; you have no real enthusiasm, no red blood; only an acute moral sense. And yet I love you. Think of that."

"Wonder of wonders!" he exclaimed. To hold her captive in his arms at last after all these years taxed Henry's faith in his own senses. "Is it true? Really true? Tell me I am not dreaming."

"Love you, dearest, to my joy, my pride, my glory!" Priscilla's voice became almost a sob in the fulness of her glad confession. Lifting her head she freed herself and

dropped him an adoring curtesy. "Henceforth you are my lord and master, if you will."

Was she teaching him to woo? Where was his place but at her feet? "If I will? And I feared I had lost you forever, Priscilla darling." Falling on one knee, Henry clasped her hand and covered it with kisses. Clumsy and inarticulate though he might be, his posture at least should proclaim the transport in his soul. "I have worshipped you all these years," he said, "as you well know. I loved you from the hour we first met. You are the only woman I have ever loved. Believe me that my love shall never die—

> 'Till the sun grows cold
> And the stars grow old
> And the leaves of the Judgment book unfold.'

Sweet as were the ardent phrases, Priscilla looked down at him archly.

"You threw me over for your sister. Do you remember —Mr. Hafiz Sumner?"

"Ah, do not remind me of it."

"And apologized for not asking me to marry you."

"But tell me that I have improved a little," he implored.

"A little—yes, just a little," she mused joyously. "But you are substantially the same. Yet are you not my own true love?"

There was that in the inquiry which bade the transported Henry spring to his feet and spread his arms for a fresh embrace. But Priscilla gaily drew back and, laying her hands upon his shoulders, she held him at arm's length, crying:

"Yes, you have loved me for years in your crawfish way; but you have not really changed. Even now as you

look at me you're realizing that I am virtually an old maid and are picking out unconsciously the weak points in my personal appearance. Yes, you are," she continued, gazing into his ecstatic but still bewildered eyes. "You can't help it—you can't help it. It's you—it always will be you. But it's no matter—for I have tested you, my lord and master, and you are the truest of them all."

Thus by this glad surrender was Morgan Drake's prophecy justified and Priscilla's troth plighted. But even in the presence of these blissful but promising nuptials, the student of human nature must perforce admit that not the doughty deeds of a Bostonian but rather the things he will not do are his highest title to distinction.

CHAPTER XXVIII

HENRY SUMNER'S renunciation of more than half a million rather than change his name stirred Boston to its depths. All the newspapers published his decision in flaring headlines, and the *Mercury*, in its Sunday edition of the following week, printed a symposium by well-known citizens of both sexes with the caption, "What would you do under similar circumstances?"

But the Back Bay was the storm centre of agitation. At the last meeting for the season of the Mother Eve's Club the topic was fiercely debated behind closed doors. According to rumor, Henry's action was approved, but by a less conclusive majority than his admirers had looked for. The opposition owed its strength to a speech by Miss Winston, who earnestly pleaded that it was incumbent on him for the sake of his future children to disregard senti-

ment and keep the money. While the inner circles of Boston were revolving the question whether this frankly utilitarian view was not, after all, fundamentally sound, the breath was, so to speak, suddenly knocked out of Miss Winston's argument by the announcement of Henry's engagement to Priscilla Avery. Manifestly the children born of this union would not lack an abundant share of this world's goods.

Those who regarded Henry's conduct as Utopian sought to belittle it by the insinuation that he was already engaged at the time his decision was made. Positive denials to the contrary were still rife when the marriage ceremony itself took place in Trinity Church, but in the presence only of the near relations; and the happy pair sailed immediately to pass their honeymoon in Europe.

Their wedding was in the nature of a compromise. Mrs. Avery, who hungered for an elaborate function, solicitously pointed out that the arrangements for the wedding dress, the wedding cake, the wedding invitations and the various other details demanded three months rather than three weeks. Henry, on his side, proposed slipping out some fine morning and being made man and wife off-hand. Priscilla demurred at this and also at the idea of being married in a travelling dress. However few the witnesses, her wedding garment should be worthy of the occasion—the most fateful moment in every woman's life, when she ought to look her loveliest. Was not one of the opportunities of wealth to deck the bride? The veil of choicest lace, the lustrous diamonds, were but symbols; yet if woman were to abdicate her office as the high priestess of beauty, what would befall a workaday world? She had no intention of becoming dowdy or even of modelling herself on a New England school-ma'am, because she was so

fortunate as to be about to marry a man with a sensitive New England conscience. Was not a wedding in the presence of kinsfolk and dearest friends—despite occasional mercenary display—one of the few picturesque ceremonies remaining in an age given over to short cuts and colorless informalities?

At the same time Priscilla acknowledged the perfect accuracy of her lover's further plea—gingerly expressed to save her feelings, but none the less potent—that so much of their youth had already been consumed in finding out that they loved each other, it behooved them to be married as soon as possible. There was no blinking the fact that she was already an old maid; why tolerate further delay? Moreover, the summer vacation was at hand. So Priscilla fixed the day arbitrarily and the arrangements were made to conform thereto. Henry, haunted by the fear that he would misplace the wedding ring, fingered it nervously in his waistcoat pocket. Yet as he walked proudly down the aisle with the bride on his arm, for whom he had served more faithfully than Jacob for Rachel, even Blaisdell, who was congratulating himself on not standing in his shoes, was forced to admit that the groom could cut an aristocratic figure when his mind was set on it. Some good genius had prompted Henry to order a new frock coat, not rely on the ancient article reserved for use on Sundays and at afternoon teas. But Mrs. Sumner's eyes, as the couple came abreast of her, though they keenly noted externals, solved the wrapt expression on her son's face with the phrase—

"He for God only, she for God in him."

The sweetness of her surrender still lingered on Priscilla's brow and her loveliness wore the glorified charm of the

bride who has no doubts. So it seemed to her mother-in-law, who forthwith forgave her for belonging to the Episcopal Church—Mrs. Sumner's only remaining grievance. Priscilla's repudiation as a girl of the Unitarian faith in which she had been brought up by her father was part of her protest against the New England conscience. Might not Henry be relied on to be true to the religious convictions of his ancestors every other Sunday? Might not even Priscilla consent in time to worship regularly at King's Chapel, where, though the doctrine preached was Unitarian, an expurgated text of the Church of England service was in use?

Nor was the radiant beauty of the bride lost on Blaisdell. Despite his self-congratulations he winced a little as she passed. But though he did not have the satisfaction of observing that she looked pale, his conviction that he was well rid of her as a wife was reaffirmed by the expression of her nostrils which still indicated to him the fiery, restless steed. He had made her a superb present—a necklace of the finest pearls—to show how genuinely sentiment had subsided into friendship and sisterly regard. Moreover, save for this one instant of involuntary regret, Blaisdell's mind was busy with other thoughts—thoughts which shaped themselves at the wedding breakfast still more definitely, for he found himself at one of the small tables for four with Chauncey Chippendale's wife and sister Georgiana. He forgot the bride's existence in his enjoyment of the consciousness that they both were being deliberately civil to him, and that the civility of the one differed from the civility of the other. Mrs. Chauncey had been coached by her husband to try her fascinations on him as a last resort—this was clear. As for Georgiana, it was she who had engineered that he should occupy this table with

them. There was one at least of the Chippendale family on whom he had made a favorable impression from the time when they first had met—and she the only beauty of the stock. Blaisdell enjoyed the triumphant sensation of sitting between two such fashionable and handsome women. The efforts of Beatrice to cajole entertained him and at the same time were flattering. The accomplishment of one of his two great ambitions was close at hand; but it had ever been his policy to avoid scars. If the abdication of his rival on State Street might be bloodless, so much the better. He listened graciously to the inquiries which Mrs. Chippendale was making concerning Lora's daughter. How old was Dorothy now? And how long before she would "come out"? Then some one rose—it was Chauncey—to propose the health of the bride.

The bride? She had been his other ambition—the most engrossing of the two at one time. Fortunately it had become unattainable—chiefly because he had changed his mind. However great the obstacles he would have overcome them at last had not his ardor cooled. The midday glass of champagne of which Blaisdell had already partaken gave new zest to this comforting reflection. He had never failed yet in attaining anything on which his heart was tenaciously set. His only regret was that his house lacked a mistress and Lora's children a mother.

"The health of the bride!"

Blaisdell raised his glass with gusto and drank. Chancing to shift his glance slightly, he surprised the eyes of Georgiana fixed on him in covert scrutiny. She turned away with lady-like composure leaving him to contemplate only her finely cut profile and well-poised head. He gazed for a moment, then drained his champagne to the last drop in exultant recognition that a stealthy thought lately enter-

tained by him had been galvanized into a dominating purpose.

Not long after the small company of guests was departing.

"Don't forget your box of wedding cake, Hugh," cried Mrs. Avery, who was in the best of spirits, having been hand-in-glove for an hour with the entire Chippendale-Sumner connection. She hoped it might continue for the rest of her life. She had been so bold already as to confide to several of the family her shrewd criticism on the match —that so far as she was able to discover, Henry and dear Priscilla might just as well have married fifteen years sooner.

Possessing himself of one of the boxes Blaisdell bided his time so as to escort to their carriage the two ladies whose companion he had been at breakfast. He was in the act of closing the carriage door when Georgiana exclaimed with dismay: "I've forgotten my wedding cake." It was plain that she had been reminded by the sight of the box which Blaisdell held. "Take mine," he responded instantly, and he thrust it into her hands. "Thank you very much, Mr. Blaisdell. I wanted some to dream on. Don't forget your promise to call some Sunday afternoon."

One morning about three weeks subsequent to the wedding Chauncey Chippendale sat at his desk in the spacious offices of Langdon & Company lost in melancholy thought. He was expecting a visitor and he was wondering what the upshot of the interview was likely to be. So far as outward appearances the world had no reason to imagine that any one on the Back Bay was more prosperous than he; and yet he stood on the brink of catastrophe. Not only was his commercial prestige on State Street in jeopardy, but he was financially crippled. If his notes to the

banks which would become due in the next sixty days were not renewed his private fortune would be virtually swept away, and his firm be able to escape embarrassment only by that most mortifying of expedients, an appeal to his father-in-law. General Langdon on his retirement had allowed a liberal sum to remain on interest with the new partnership. To apply to him further in the face of this would be equivalent to an admission of incapacity and failure.

Was it his own fault? Had he been rash? Chauncey had put these questions to himself frequently of late, and he asked them now again. He must admit that his course in life had not been in strict conformity with precedent; he had certainly overstepped the limits of that traditional Boston conservatism which hived half of its annual income and left a strong box crammed with Boston & Albany, C. B. & Q. and other gilt-edged securities. His excuse—his justification was that times had changed. It was a progressive age—and the most signal change of all was that the younger generation had difficulty in living on three or four times more than it cost its fathers and mothers. There was where the shoe pinched; the older generation was able to save because it had such few expenses—cared for so few things—and everything cost so little. It was necessary for the ambitious man of the present day who desired to grow rich to take chances—the risks of modern business enterprise. He had merely taken these chances and circumstances had combined against him. But for the series of untoward events following in quick succession which fortune had arrayed against him, he would not have been worsted.

His judgment had been good. He had picked out Electric Coke as a winner from the start and clung to it. He

had no doubt that its intrinsic value to-day was greater than ever. Whoever obtained absolute control would reap eventually a still more splendid harvest. But the stock had been the weakest on the list of late; purposely depressed, he had every reason to believe, for the purpose of accumulation—of forcing out weak holders. And he was powerless to avail himself of the opportunity for lack of ready money. Even the one hundred thousand dollars left him by his aunt would be needed to replenish the depreciation in value of his collateral in case the banks were ready to renew the loans.

Yet Boston was richer than ever. The huge safety deposit boxes now held private fortunes compared with which the wealth of those who had died in the previous generation dwindled into insignificance. His own father, once considered rich, lived almost in genteel poverty. His uncle and aunt had left large estates, yet inconspicuous if measured by the standards of the new plutocracy. If luck had not been against him, he might have become one of the geniunely rich, and, keeping pace with the march of events, maintained the social leadership of the Chippendales. Instead—an interview must presently be undergone which would either mean the sacrifice of family pride —eating humble pie—or comparative ruin.

Chauncey sighed and bit his lip. One thing which he ever prided himself on was that he was a good "sportsman." He had played the "game," and he must play it to the end with all the courage and also with all the intelligence which he possessed. If it came to the worst, must he not for his wife's sake take General Langdon into his counsels and be tided over his immediate necessities? Humiliating as this would be, it would only be commonsense. Yet it would mean the loss of his position as a

leader down-town and a death blow to his ambition as a financier. Trying instinctively to think if there were not some one else to whom he could apply, his mind conjured up Henry. Henry was abroad, so it was out of the question. Besides, the money belonged to Henry's wife.

Nevertheless he lingered on the reflection and with amusement. Henry was disgustingly rich; a dripping-pan in spite of himself and of having always been indifferent to money. Was it not the irony of fate? Henry needed so little, and he so much; yet Henry and Priscilla had more than they knew what to do with. They would be able to live sumptuously on a modern scale and yet continue the dynasty of worthy public-spirited Bostonians who subscribed to every deserving cause, made liberal benefactions to Harvard College, and saved up part of each year's income. Priscilla, to be sure, could be counted on to temper Henry's asceticism, but their ultimate aims would be identical, and the Puritan impulse leavened still remain a ruling power in Boston.

Chauncey smiled at the mental picture which he drew. He could not deny that Henry had deserved his good fortune. His only stricture was that it was wasted on his cousin. There appeared to be, after all, he reflected, a sort of alliance between thrift and righteousness in such instances which fostered dripping-pans. He glanced at the small clock on his desk. It was almost on the stroke of noon—the hour of his appointment. Blaisdell's letter of the previous day—"May I come to see you to-morrow at twelve o'clock? I should like to confabulate on certain matters"—lay before him. His mind had dwelt on the contents ever since. They savored of mystery. Confabulation was a word of easy-going import, but he knew that

it would be characteristic of Blaisdell to hand him a cup of hemlock with a propitiating face.

He heard steps and turned. His visitor, punctual to a moment, was being ushered in. Chauncey noticed his quick, business-like tread, and the breezy yet alert urbanity with which he exchanged a few words with the junior who had piloted him. There was that in the combination of his medium height, thickset figure, round face and small, observant eyes which suggested to Chauncey's sensitive apprehension success personified. He had no nerves, no harassing sensibilities, and adversity flowed off him like water off a duck's back. Was he not able at necessity to dive at the flash and come up smiling in another spot?

"I wrote to make sure that you would be disengaged. I have been hoping some time for the opportunity to discuss certain matters with you, Chippendale. But I'm glad," he added with an odd smile, "in the light of—er—what I know to-day that I was dilatory."

Blaisdell had seated himself. "Can you give me half an hour alone?" he asked.

Chauncey rose and closed the door. "I have already given orders that we are not to be disturbed."

Blaisdell sat back comfortably in his chair with his hands resting lightly on its arms. He looked Chauncey squarely in the face as if to demonstrate his frankness. "I'll come straight to the point to begin with—and then we'll consider the pros and cons. I think I spoke to you once, Chippendale, about an idiosyncrasy or fad of mine. I didn't seek to justify it then on strictly rational grounds; I don't now. But it still exists—obsesses me, as they say nowadays, and I've come to make you an offer." Blaisdell paused to draw out an envelope from his inside pocket. "I've put it in writing, and it stands good for the next sixty

days. I am ready to pay you one thousand dollars per share for the entire holdings in Electric Coke controlled by you and your following. The whole or none. My figure is a liberal one—nearly three hundred dollars per share above the current nominal market price. Look this over at your leisure, but it simply formulates what I have just told you."

Chauncey took the paper and glanced at it mechanically to gain time. The offer was not unexpected; the price named was conspicuously generous. He could scarcely have demurred as a business proposition to terms of slaughter at what his visitor had appropriately called the current nominal price.

"I remember perfectly your offer some two years ago to buy me out, and that you described your desire for control as a fad. Electric Coke is worth more than $1,000 a share, Blaisdell."

"Unquestionably, yes—intrinsically that is. Otherwise I should not be making you this offer."

"And the recent depression in the stock is artificial."

"I have already intimated so. My figure implies it. But the future value is, in my opinion, largely contingent on the management. If the control of the company continues to be divided, I shall expect to see the stock sell considerably lower than the present market quotation."

Chauncey flushed. The suave rejoinder was appallingly explicit, yet provided no ground of offence. The offer was open for sixty days; if not accepted, his loans would be called on the plea that the securities of his various new enterprises were no longer acceptable; and then Electric Coke would break sharply. The sequence of events was clearly foreshadowed; and he was left to choose between two alternatives, either of which would involve a crushing

blow to his pride—surrender or disaster. Why should he not choose the lesser of these evils?

But why, if Blaisdell was prepared to crush him if he refused, had he made an offer so much above the market? The query suddenly forced itself on his mind and became predominant. A Chippendale accept mercy? Such a proposition would be the worst sort of affront. In his swift resentment of the possibility that he was being treated as an object of charity, Chauncey realized how much he was growing to resemble his own father. What reason had prompted Blaisdell to stay his hand? Chauncey's suspicions were awakened; yet for the moment there was nothing tangible to pounce on. Instead, he sought to relieve the entire situation by grasping at what he realized to be a straw.

"Have you ever considered, Hugh," he said, "that if you and I were to combine forces in Electric Coke instead of trying perpetually to outbid and oust the other, the stock would sell at any price we two chose to set for it?"

A flag of truce from a Chippendale. A trifle late in the campaign, but, to a philosophical mind like Blaisdell's, diverting. The moment was one of the sweetest in his life, and his infinitely good-humored mouth revealed beneath its stiff mustache a shade of exultation.

"We two? I doubt it, Chauncey. You and I are very differently constituted. We approach almost everything from a different standpoint; consequently our views in regard to the management of a big corporation could hardly fail to be dissimilar. We've been brought up in different schools." He paused a moment, then resumed with a twinkle in his eyes: "I'm a stranger in Boston—a stranger by birth and antecedents. In some ways this has been a handicap possibly; in others I flatter myself that it has

proved to be an advantage. Any success which I have achieved may be partially due to a keener appreciation of modern business methods than those born and bred here possess, and—er—by my lack of familiarity with certain provincial customs to which they choose to remain subservient. All this explains why I'd rather continue to paddle my own canoe and avoid what might prove to be entangling alliances."

"He deliberately dares to show and glory in the cloven hoof at last," said the amazed Chauncey to himself. His nerves tingled with the desire to show his visitor the door in response to the smooth impertinence by which his proposal of coöperation had been rejected. But his dire necessities bade him sit still and even apply the salve of satire to his ire; for the audacious plausibility of the homily invoked his sense of humor.

"I appreciate what you mean, Blaisdell. You have a hold on Boston, I admit, which is partially due, as you suggest, to your lack of familiarity with many things which seem important to the rest of us. In view of that hold—in view of the fact that for the time being, at any rate, you seem to have an advantage down-town which has led you to make me an offer, I'm curious to know before I consent to sell out my interest in Electric Coke—why you offer me three hundred dollars a share more than the market price? Frankly, that puzzles me—and I'm provincial enough still to wish to inquire the reason of it."

Blaisdell regarded him blandly. "Do you suspect me of premeditated philanthropy?"

Chauncey frowned at this penetration of his solicitude. "Scarcely," he said somewhat haughtily. "But such a sacrifice, unexplained, would seem inconsistent with those modern business methods to which you referred just now."

Blaisdell's smile broadened. "That illustrates, if I may say so, your ignorance of those methods. I have always been ready to give you a fair price for your stock, Chauncey. I wanted it and you knew that I wanted it, and the surest way to get it was to make you a liberal proposition. To offer you the current market price—crowd you, so to speak—would have antagonized you, and stood in the way of a harmonious deal. I should have made an enemy of you to no purpose in the long run." He paused a moment, then resumed: "I don't say that a week ago I would have begun with an offer of one thousand dollars a share. But the situation has changed since then. I want the stock just as badly as ever and my relations toward you are altered. I was speaking just now of entangling alliances. There is one in favor of which I am about to make a glittering exception to my general line of conduct. Chauncey, I've also come to tell you of my engagement to your sister Georgiana."

The dumfounded Chauncey stared, then sprang forward in his chair echoing the words: "Engaged to Georgy? My sister Georgy."

"She did me the honor to accept me two days ago; and I think I appreciate the extent of my good fortune."

"It's one of the biggest surprises of my life—I can't conceal that, Hugh."

Chauncey certainly looked as if the world had suddenly been turned topsy-turvy. Yet he hastened like the man of the world he was to play the acrobat and rise to the emergency. "I congratulate you—old man," he continued putting out his hand. "Georgiana is usually referred to as the flower of the family." He could not refrain from adding: "Does my father know?"

"I have just come from an interview with Mr. Chippen-

dale at his house. The idea was evidently novel to him—as it was to you. But I thought I detected signs that he would get used to it."

Used to it? They must all get used to it. Cool as the phrase was, it had struck the key-note of the situation. Georgiana was no green or flighty girl, but a young woman of mature experience. In taking the bit between her teeth and ignoring the traditions of the family she must have acted with deliberation. As Blaisdell's wife she was certain to become an important personage. His wealth, power and energy were indisputable. That phase of the new alliance was not to be ignored. Moreover, there was nothing to demonstrate that Georgy had not fallen in love with him.

"You've managed cleverly to keep us all in the dark. How long has this been going on?" Chauncey asked indulgently.

"Actively, only for a few months; in a passive sense, I feel justified in saying that each of us was interested by the other from the first time we met; this was when your sister visited me at my office to enlist my services on behalf of the Bacchante. I think we may fairly ascribe the rest to fate."

"Still waters run deep. I was on a different track. I had an idea—" But Chauncey tactfully forbore to complete the sentence. Fate? If destiny were an accomplice, there were certain compensating advantages to be weighed; advantages affecting himself. Would not Blaisdell, as a brother-in-law, even though unwilling to brook a rival on State Street, become a bulwark to the family? Galling as would be for the time being the sale of his interests in Electric Coke, his own swift financial recuperation was assured. His sister's husband would cease to plot against

him. Chauncey's spirits rose as his mind's eye depicted the ultimate consequences of the match. It was virtually a compromise. Blaisdell would be taken into the family, and, on the other hand, their individual enmity would terminate; a reign of amity, or at least, neutrality where the other's interests were concerned, would be inaugurated. Was not all life a perpetual compromise? Thereupon Chauncey put his rainbow-like conclusions into speech:

"You've been a remarkably successful fellow, Hugh. You're entitled to a handsome and attractive wife; and Georgy is both. As I've said, she's the flower of our family. She's clever, too. Before you know it, she'll be making your house the social centre of Boston. She has a taste for lions; foreigners who come here and that sort of thing."

Blaisdell nodded affably in acknowledgment of this graciousness. "I shall have a sponsor, too, who will enlighten my ignorance of matters peculiarly Bostonian—which is something to be profoundly grateful for, I fully appreciate."

Was this the last flicker of expiring independence or a caveat for the future? Blaisdell's bantering manner provided no definite clew. Chauncey measured him for an instant, then said quietly:

"It's certainly not to a girl's disadvantage in Boston that she happens to belong to one of the oldest families. That's one of the—er—peculiarities which still exist here. Georgy will be able to go about everywhere with your daughter."

"I had considered that, too. It seems to be a happy arrangement from various points of view. Among other things, it ought to bring you and me closer together."

Specious as was this tender of the olive branch, Chauncey could not refrain from pointing out what seemed an inconsistency.

"It ought," he said. "Yet, my dear fellow, you begin by depriving me of Electric Coke."

Blaisdell laughed. "We've settled that. It's as good as a part of the marriage contract."

So the thought of compromise was in his mind also. Chauncey smiled inwardly at his own shrewdness. Meanwhile Blaisdell was saying: "Besides, a large sum in ready cash is always convenient. I am giving you a fancy price, Chauncey."

"Then it *was* premeditated philanthropy?"

Blaisdell sat back with a demeanor of mock cherubic despair. "What a fastidious fellow you are. First you blow hot and then you blow cold. You protest against parting with Electric Coke and in the next breath you accuse me of trying to do you a good turn. The stock is worth intrinsically more than a thousand dollars a share and you know it. My offer is a strict business proposition. It isn't strict in the sense of trying to pare down my purchase to the lowest possible figure. But taking into consideration the fact that I'm going to marry your sister, I'll leave it to you whether you ought to insist on my endeavoring to cut your throat. It wouldn't be human to begin with; the members of the family should stand together. And it would be poor business policy, as I have previously intimated."

The argument sounded indisputable. Yet Chauncey was unreasonable enough to reflect, "In other words, he's propping up the honor of the Chippendales, confound him! and getting a good thing at the same time." But what he said was:

"All right. Seeing that you're virtually one of the family, I accept."

. . . . . .

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new;
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

And how concludes our drama? The marriage of Georgiana, youngest daughter of Harrison Chippendale, Esq., to Hugh McDowell Blaisdell, the prominent banker, philanthropist and patron of the arts, was the leading social event of the autumn following the announcement of their engagement. Incidentally the personality and success of the fortunate bridegroom were the theme of various epithalamic articles in the columns of the press. These pointed out that the reasons why he invariably accomplished his purposes were that he made friends with everybody, never stood on points or took captious attitudes, was willing to live and let live, and believed profoundly in the future development of the country. With such authority to speak for him, we will leave to stern censors like Henry Sumner to insist that democracy runs a danger in carrying easy-going optimism to the point where, from fear of giving offence, or in order to remain comfortable, no conviction endures the test of opposition. It is for us merely to scan the passing show and record the annals of a changing civilization. There are no more important people in Boston to-day than the Hugh McDowell Blaisdells. Georgiana is a changed woman, so the world says. It was just the opportunity which suited her—a huge fortune and a husband with brains—and she has made the most of both. The "coming out" ball given for Lora's daughter two years after their marriage surpassed all former entertain-

ments in the elegance of the appointments and the costliness of the viands provided. There were "bridge" tables in the ante-rooms for the dowagers, and the special cars which carried Harvard College back to Cambridge ran by broad daylight. Georgy's hand is on the throttle of society; she intends to manage it and her power is already acknowledged. Was she not a Chippendale? Her stepdaughter Dorothy was one of the few "buds" invited to the Puritan balls of which, of course, Georgiana is one of the patronesses. So the whirligig of time brings about its revenges.

Are there not Puritans enough still in Boston? There are people who would rid the world of them altogether, claiming that they are forbidding and awkward; have "customs but no manners." But these would-be exterminators must reckon with the baby carriages on the sunny side of Commonwealth Avenue, where rosy-cheeked, tiny dripping-pans with their nurses still hold sway, obstructing the daily forenoon walk of old Mr. Harrison Chippendale, who, hale though tremulous, has avoided the comforts of McLean Asylum. Prominent among them ride Priscilla's boy twins—one the living image of his father—while their first child, a daughter, with the eyes and the dash of her mother, trips gaily beside her brothers. But let the exterminators take heart. There are rumors that Henry's sister, Mrs. Paton, smokes an occasional cigarette; not for audacity's sake, but because she likes it; and insists that most civilized women do. The social historian must not forbear to state facts, though philosophy and ethics languish.

Beatrice Chippendale contests the palm of society with Georgy, for her husband Chauncey is abundantly prosperous. His fortunes are rehabilitated; most of his new

ventures have proved profitable with time; and his firm has regained its reputation for conservatism. People refer to it already as an old-fashioned house. Everything is comparative in this moving world; so the rashness of one decade becomes the prudence of the next. But Chauncey is a power down-town largely by reflected light, though the Chippendales are to-day, by virtue of their money and their connections, more signally than ever the leading family of Boston. Chauncey is growing a little stout. Beatrice would like him to retire presently, and devote more personal attention to their children, who are to be taught to speak foreign languages fluently with a view to diplomatic careers. With this in view, and Chauncey out of business, could not the whole family spend two years in Europe delightfully? Beatrice has recently inherited from her father, General Langdon, an additional half million.

Hugh Blaisdell, almost immediately after his marriage, withdrew from the firm of which, for so many years, he had been the head in everything but name, in order to devote himself more closely to the affairs of Electric Coke. Blaisdell's senior, Delano, also retired at the same time, and to the reorganized partnership both Jack Stoddard and Georgy's brother Arthur were admitted. The new brokerage firm transacts Blaisdell's dealings in the market and is believed to be more closely in touch with what is going on down-town than any of its contemporaries. Electric Coke is one of the great industrial corporations of the world. Not long ago Blaisdell swallowed up and merged all competitors in a huge trust, in which he owns a controlling interest and of which he is the active president. Its new stock sells at a figure which represents a value for the old stock of more than double the price paid by him to Chauncey; its profits are reported to be fabulous.

Boston can point to Hugh McDowell Blaisdell as the possessor of a "first-class" fortune.

Morgan Drake, convalescent from a fever contracted during the war with Spain, has written a successful play with a touch of melodrama. He is said to be rather ashamed of it, but he collects the royalties. Rumor reports that an engagement between him and Lily Sumner is not improbable at this late day, in spite of the lady's devotion to Christian Science. Georgiana Blaisdell's sisters seem doomed to a single life; but that lot is borne philosophically by both of them. The elder has recently been chosen a Back Bay member of the State Board of Charities, and the younger is in close touch with the new Emmanuel healing movement. Lora's son is at Harvard in his sophomore year. His father would like to see him "make" one of the leading clubs; but college students are independent spirits, and a large allowance is by no means a passport. For the moment the young man's most absorbing interest is his high-power touring car, in which he careers about the country, and, like Jehu, the son of Nimshi, he driveth furiously.

But what of the New England conscience? What of Henry Sumner? It will not expire while he is left to guard it. Alert he stands, as the angel with the flaming sword at the gate of Paradise, to detect and repel the foes of civic righteousness. Reverence for the exact truth is his watchword; he palters not with principle. Graceless and a little grim he still tilts at windmills; but prompted by the wife of his bosom, he tries to temper his rampant zeal with the gospel of joyous toleration. Yet even as the leopard changeth not its spots, so it is with the true Bostonian.

But the would-be exterminator of the Puritan is likely to have his way, despite Priscilla's twins. Already the social

type for which Henry Sumner stands is waning fast before the pressure of foreign and visible forces. Let whoever doubts this face Boston from the region of the west when the setting sun transfigures the landscape of the Back Bay fens and ponder. On what does the eye linger? On the commanding dome of the Christian Science temple, on the Saracenic top of the Hebrew Synagogue, on the official roof of the Roman Catholic See. Beyond this vanguard of conflicting old-world doctrines, reincarnated on New England soil, lies an already cosmopolitan city, proud of its traditions and its glory. Richer than ever in the fruits of its industry and thrift, seething—still seething—with all the problems of the universe, will it hold its distinction as a moulder of thought and a quickener of conscience when Henry and his like slumber with the mastodon and the buffalo? That is for posterity to answer. Or, if you are impatient to know, ask Blaisdell. He can tell you anything.

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